



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

VISITING TEAM REPORT

Branford High School

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

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

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

Teaching and Learning Standards

Core Values and Beliefs About Learning

Curriculum

Instruction

Assessment of and for Student Learning

Support Standards

School Culture and Leadership

School Resources for Learning

Community Resources for Learning

CORE VALUES, BELIEFS, AND LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

CURRICULUM

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

INSTRUCTION

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT LEARNING

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Support Standard

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

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

SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Support Standard

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

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

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

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Support Standard

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

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

School and Community Summary

School and Community Summary

Branford High School is located in and serves the town of Branford. The town is located near the center of Connecticut's Long Island shoreline, within New Haven County; Branford is approximately 8 miles east of New Haven. Branford has a population of 28,498 citizens living in 12,410 households. The racial profile of Branford is 86.7 percent white (24,719), 5.1 percent Hispanic (1,467), 4.1 percent Asian/Pacific Islander (1,180), 2.8 percent other/multi-racial (797), and 1.2 percent African American (335).

The median family income is \$71,058, with a poverty rate of 7.7 percent and an unemployment rate of 5.7 percent. Employment in the area includes construction, manufacturing, retail trade, health care & social assistance, accommodation and food services, and government.

In addition to Branford High School (grades 9-12) with a population of 1,050, Francis Walsh Intermediate School (5-8) has 942 students, and the three elementary schools, Mary R. Tisko, John B. Sliney, and Mary T. Murphy have 400, 374, and 420 students. There is one pre-kindergarten school, the Indian Neck School, with 36 students. This gives the Branford School District a total enrollment of 3,222 students. There are two private schools located in Branford, St. Mary School (PK-8) and Shoreline School of Montessori (PK-KG).

The total expenditure per student in the Branford School District is \$15,989, slightly higher than the state average of \$15,389. The town's total annual revenue is \$94,417,926 with \$81,430,414 raised as tax revenue. The majority of the town annual expenditures are for education at \$52,066,037 or 64 percent of local taxation.

Branford High School has a total enrollment of 1,050 students divided between 513 males and 537 females. The high school's population has remained stable over the past five years, however, the district's total enrollment of 3,222 students has decreased by 5% over the past five years. The diversity score for the school is 0.37, which is lower than the state average of 0.61. The ethnic, racial, and cultural composition of the school is 80.6 percent white (846), 7.9 percent Asian students (83), 3.5 percent African American students (37), and 8.0 percent Hispanic students (84) during the 2013-2014 school year. For the 2013-2014 school year the two-year dropout rate was 3.8 percent, whereas the graduation rate was 91 percent. The percent of students chronically absent at Branford High School is 14.4 percent. The average number of days absent due to illness or personal time for teachers in the school is 9.3.

There are 91 teachers at Branford High School, creating a ratio of 12:1, which is lower than the state average of 13:1. Students attend school for 181 days and a total of 941 hours of instruction per year.

In the class of 2014, sixty-four percent of graduates attended four-year colleges, fifteen percent enrolled in two-year colleges, six percent enrolled in other schools, ten percent directly entered the workforce, three percent entered the military, and two percent were undecided.

Branford High School is dedicated to ensuring students are provided with a wide variety of educational and career opportunities in the larger community. Branford High School has partnerships with many educational institutions including: UConn - Early College Experience (ECE) courses, University of New Haven-Early College courses, Gateway Community College - High School Partnership Program, Gateway Community College - Career Pathways Program, College Board - Advanced Placement Course Program, Southern CT - Language and Exposure Culture Programs at Yale University, Porter and Chester Technical Career Institute Program for HS Students, ACES-Educational Center for the Arts. Additionally, both job shadowing and career internships opportunities are coordinated for interested students. One program in particular, the Senior Internship program, allows graduating seniors to participate in an internship of their choosing for the last month of school. Many seniors utilize this program as an opportunity to gain knowledge and experience in their field of interest.

Branford High School has a number of ongoing student recognition programs. Some of these programs are honor roll for academic achievement, which includes an annual Honors Breakfast to recognize students that made the honor roll. Additionally, there is also a CAPT breakfast held annually to honor those that scored well on the test. The Rotary Club of Branford awards students each month for their academic excellence and service to the community. Teachers help select students for this award based on these qualifications. At the end of each year there is an Achievement Awards night held at the school to salute students that have excelled in each of the academic departments. Perfect attendance and other special recognition are also acknowledged. The Senior Scholarship Awards night is held during the last month of school each year. Over 80 different scholarships, donated by numerous organizations, businesses, and families within the community, are awarded to members of the senior class for a variety of achievements, including academics, community service, and character.

Core Values, Beliefs and Learning Expectations

Mission and Expectations for Student Learning

The mission of Branford High School is to prepare students to be independent and collaborative learners who are responsible, informed, and contributing members of society. In partnership with the community, we strive to provide a learning environment that supports all students in embracing diversity, acting with integrity, and achieving their personal and academic potential.

Academic Expectations

The Branford High School graduate is able to:

- Read actively and critically for a variety of purposes.
- Write effectively for a range of purposes and audiences.
- Demonstrate appropriate and effective use of technology.
- Collaborate and communicate to convey ideas/positions.
- Implement critical thinking skills to solve problems.

Civic and Social Expectations

The Branford High School students demonstrate:

- The ability to be contributing members of their community
- Respect for themselves, their fellow students, the faculty, staff, as well as their school and community
- A recognition and an understanding of the benefits of diversity in their school and community
- Integrity while participating in all academic and social activities
- An understanding of lifelong value of personal physical fitness and good health

Introduction

Introduction

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

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

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

Teaching and Learning Standards

- Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

- Curriculum

- Instruction

- Assessment of and for Student Learning

Support of Teaching and Learning Standards

- School Culture and Leadership

- School Resources for Learning

- Community Resources for Learning

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

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit - The School Self-Study

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

people. The self-study of Branford High School extended over a period of seventeen school months from October 2014 to June 2016. The visiting team was pleased to note that some parents and students joined the professional staff in the self-study deliberations through participation in the school's Community and Academic Standards Committee.

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

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

The Process Used by the Visiting team

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

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- twenty hours shadowing fourteen students
- a total of sixteen hours of classroom observation (in addition to time shadowing students)
- numerous informal observations in and around the school
- tours of the facility
- individual meetings with 32 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and the assessment of student learning
- group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers

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

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

Standard 1 Indicator 1

Conclusions

Branford High School (BHS) engaged in a dynamic, collaborative, and predominantly inclusive process that was informed by research-based best practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning. The school's foundational beliefs about learning are grounded in 21st century best practices including state and national standards, rubrics, and student-centered instruction. The impact of that research surfaces in the learning standards, which are meaningful, address essential skills and understandings, and reflect current student learning needs. Additionally, many class and subject-specific analytic rubrics effectively identify specific descriptions of different levels of student performance. Teachers use document based questions (DBQs) and Common Core State Standards in the instruction and assessment of writing. Mathematics teachers use a departmental rubric that addresses current elements of thinking about problem solving. English and social studies teachers use writing rubrics based on Common Core State Standards that share language from the school-wide rubrics, supporting student mastery of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

The revision of the school's values and expectations involved participants from every relevant constituency including students, parents, faculty, staff, and school and district administrators. The involvement of parents in the overall process was limited to those participating in parent/principal coffee events and the community and academic standards committee (CASC). To develop the core values and learning expectations, the school employed an extensive, reflective process that persisted over approximately eighteen months. Beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, the staff examined Common Core State Standards expectations for literacy, numeracy, problem solving, and technology. Ongoing discussion that included classroom teachers, the school's leadership team, the CASC, and students during advisory informed the process. The faculty voted to accept the proposed mission statement on January 15, 2014 and the school board adopted it in May 2014.

At the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year, the revised core values replaced the previous version in documents, curriculum, advisory, and extra-curricular activities. Banners, posters, and smaller classroom signs were also updated to reflect the change. In the 2015-2016 school year, the statement was added to all staff, faculty, and student identification badges. Teachers include the statement in their course syllabi. As a result of BHS's dynamic, collaborative and predominantly inclusive process, the school has established a meaningful focus to guide curriculum and instructional practice to support student mastery of the school's 21st century learning expectations. When the school involves even more parents, it can ensure that its foundational commitments are embraced by the entire school community.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- parents
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 1 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Branford High School (BHS) has identified challenging and measurable 21st century learning expectations for all students that address academic, social, and civic competencies. The academic expectations, known as performance graduation requirements (PGRs), are defined by school-wide rubrics that identify a challenging, targeted level of achievement and which differentiate specific levels through the use of common descriptors of frequency and a binary choice on capability that appear on all rubrics: 1 = Student is unable to do the following on a consistent independent basis...; 2 = Student is developing the ability to do the following on a consistent, independent basis...; 3= Student is able to consistently and independently...; 4= Student excels at the ability to...

The commonality of these differentiating descriptors makes the rubrics accessible to students, parents, and members of the community. Because the actual performance descriptors themselves do not change, the rubrics provide limited specific feedback to students. Similarly, the rubrics provide limited feedback to help teachers identify students' current level of performance or to develop specific instructional foci to address student needs. BHS addresses students' needs, however, through the wide use of department-specific rubrics that are more descriptive and which use language appearing in the performance graduation requirements (PGRs) rubrics. The integration of the rubrics for performance graduation requirements reveals a meaningful commitment to addressing the academic PGRs in day-to-day instruction and assessment. At the same time, students describe a lack of awareness and understanding of how they receive their ratings on the PGRs. Nearly all students questioned by visiting committee members stated that there was little discussion surrounding the PGR assessments by teachers after their introduction during freshman year. Nearly all students indicated, however, that they could talk to teachers about their PGR ratings if they wished. Teachers indicate some inconsistency in how PGR ratings are implemented and assessed.

Although civic and social expectations have yet to be assessed by school-wide rubrics, the BHS Guide emphasizes these expectations, as does the advisory curriculum and school-wide restorative practices, which seek to establish shared empathy and understanding when conflicts arise among students or among students and teachers. Teachers note the implementation of restorative practice is particularly useful, although some report a need for additional professional development to support its implementation. The focus upon collaboration in PGR 4, half of which requires that students demonstrate social expectations such as the ability to talk and work effectively with others, reflects these values as well.

In addition, the school addresses its civic and social expectations through its community service learning graduation requirement, its advisory program, its developmental guidance program, and in many of the co-curricular activities available at Branford High School, such as Interact, Peace Jam, and the Young Women's Club. The school's leadership team, the accessing structured school-wide interventions/support team (ASSIST) and the guidance department review and analyze referral data to determine the extent to which the student body is meeting the school's social expectations. The results of this analysis is then used to drive interventions on either an individual student or school-wide basis, as needed. For example, recent problems at a sporting event resulted in an impromptu advisory intervention where teachers and students discussed and described appropriate fan behavior. An assistant principal then used this data to generate a "wordle", which creates a graphic that emphasizes words based on the number of times they are used. The result is an attractive poster, using the students' own words that remind students of their own description of appropriate fan behavior.

Therefore, BHS's identification of challenging and measurable 21st century learning expectations for all students addressing academic, social and civic competencies effectively supports student growth and the mastery of skills and understandings needed to take the next steps upon graduation.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 1 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Branford High School's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school, are embedded in curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom, are embodied in the school's policies and procedures and influence decision making and resource allocations. The mission statement is posted on banners, classroom signs, the school's website and in the school's guiding documents such as the Program of Studies, the Athletic Handbook, and The Guide. Teachers place the mission statement on their syllabi and include the learning expectations addressed in their courses. Posters and signs addressing social and civic issues are present in classrooms and hallways around the school. Examples include "You'll never regret doing the right thing" and "When you change the way you look at things, things you look at change." After recent problems at a sporting event, student input was used to generate a Wordle graphic posted throughout the school to remind students to be respectful when representing their community at public events.

The mission statement's emphasis on collaborative learning surfaces in many classes. In a 9th grade English class, students participate in a four corner debate and discuss their opinions in groups before responding to teacher questions. Choir students note the importance of learning to work together to learn material. Students conduct experiments in science labs in small groups. In a social studies class, students respond to questions using individual whiteboards and then share their responses, in part, to help those students who have difficulty responding.

The core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectation also drive curriculum. Branford High School is involved in curriculum revision at a school-wide and departmental level on a continual basis. Some departments participated in summer curriculum work aimed at aligning curriculum with 21st century learning expectations, performance graduation requirements (PGRs), and Common Core State Standards. In 2013, the district created the position of district curriculum director grades 5-12. The new position is designed to assist departments in not only aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment with the school's core values, but also in integrating Common Core State Standards and creating vertical and horizontal alignment within the district. Technology is used as a tool to deliver instruction in many classes. BHS demonstrates its commitment to curricular and instructional improvement by the addition of instructional coaches in English language arts, mathematics, and science and by the implementation of the instructional coaching model. In addition, the school has set aside common planning time to enable teachers to meet weekly to align curriculum, to collaborate on common assessments, to set goals and student learning objectives, and to design instruction. Teachers and administrators point to the need to continue to assess student work and the results of school-wide assessments to change curriculum and instruction. Revised PGRs identify important 21st century learning expectations. BHS continues to align the revisions to the PRGs across the curriculum. Teachers and administrators point to the need to continue to allocate resources for strategic planning to ensure intellectual rigor in the curriculum. The athletic department recently increased academic eligibility requirements, a reflection of the school's commitment to rigorous learning. Capstone, an autonomous senior learning project, creates opportunities for students to achieve and demonstrate their personal and academic potential. One senior student described the capstone as an opportunity to study a passion and inspire others.

The civic and social expectations appear in student-to-teacher relationships, as well as, in student-to-student interaction. Students from diverse backgrounds socialize at lunch or in common areas. The commons is surrounded by flags of many nations recognizing the diversity of the community. Students wearing garments representing diverse cultural or religious beliefs indicate that they feel safe and accepted at the school and in the community. Clubs such as Interact, Gay Straight Alliance, Leo, Cultural Diversity, Amnesty International, Asian Awareness, Young Women's Club, and Unified Sports exemplify the school's embrace of diversity. Advisory food collection competitions support the local food pantry. A community service graduation requirement demonstrates

the school's commitment to social responsibility.

Civic and social expectations are also demonstrated in classroom learning activities and instruction. A lesson on immigration in the AP Human Geography class reinforces the benefits of diversity in the global community. Students study the journeys of immigrants from various countries. Students practice active listening and respect for others' opinions during class discussions, even when in disagreement with a classmate's opinion. The physical education department provides courses supporting life-long physical fitness and health. For example, in the Lifetime Fitness class students walk and read an article about meditation for "Mellow Monday." A midterm exam requiring students to create a complete fitness program for a classmate is an example of authentic learning and applied assessment. A strong commitment to creativity and the arts is visible within the school.

Thus, because the 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; students are well positioned to demonstrate Branford High School's core values and demonstrate mastery of its 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- student work
- teachers
- students
- parents
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 1 Indicator 4

Conclusions

The school regularly reviews and revises its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, as well as on district and school community priorities. The school first defined performance graduation requirements (PGRs) and performance graduation expectations (PGEs) in 1992. Combined, the school had identified thirty-three such standards. The PGEs had always been departmentally focused. Early in the 2000s, BHS eliminated the PGEs as graduation standards and embedded them in department processes to better reflect their intent. The school has periodically revised and refined the remaining PGRs. Over time the school has reduced their number from seventeen to thirteen and then to seven. In addition, they were modified to apply to multiple curricular areas.

Most recently, the school reviewed the core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations in preparation for the NEASC self-study. The school's review and revision took place during an extensive, reflective process that persisted over approximately eighteen months. Beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, the staff began research on current best practices to inform their review. The faculty voted to accept the proposed mission statement and the five newly revised PGRs on January 15, 2014. The school board adopted the document in May 2014. As a result of Branford High School's reflective process of review and revision, the core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations reflect current educational best practices as well as the district's and school's priorities.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 1 Commendations

Commendation

The engagement of the school community in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research-based practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs

Commendation

The high visibility of the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations in multiple settings including school banners, classroom posters, curriculum documents, and the school's website

Commendation

The challenging and measurable 21st century learning expectations that address academic, social, and civic competencies

Commendation

The integration of the performance graduation requirements into the student report card

Commendation

The use of discipline-specific analytic rubrics to measure the 21st century academic expectations

Commendation

The many indicators used to assess whole-school progress to meet social and civic expectations

Commendation

The reflection of the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations in the culture of the school that drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations

Commendation

The regular review and revision of the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations based upon research, multiple data sources, as well as on district and school community priorities

Standard 1 Recommendations

Recommendation

Develop and implement a plan to increase the number of parents involved in the process for the school community to commit to its core values and beliefs about learning

Standard 2 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The curriculum of Branford High School is purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Teachers have been working with 21st century learning expectations and incorporating them into their courses through the use of the performance graduation requirements (PGRs). Most courses are aligned with 21st century learning expectations. Course descriptions, provided to students at the beginning of the school year and to parents at back to school night, reference corresponding PGRs. In the program of studies, course descriptions specify each relevant PGR. Performance graduation requirements were recently revised to reflect Common Core State Standards and language through a year-long process that included focus groups and full faculty meetings. The current five PGRs have been in place since the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year.

Most disciplines have developed units of study by course and grade level that indicate alignment with 21st century learning expectations. For example, the senior capstone project requires students to “demonstrate their ability to write effectively for a range of purposes and audiences” (PGR 2) through a variety of formal essays, lab reports, journal entries, responses to document-based questions, and narrative tasks. Additionally, systematic purchases of technology have increased opportunities for students to develop their capacity to demonstrate “appropriate and effective use of technology” (PGR 3) through applications of Google Docs, Chromebooks, and digital presentation platforms in English, social studies, and other departments. According to the Endicott survey, 80.0 percent of parents agree that the school provides their sons and daughters opportunities to achieve the school's learning expectations. For the Class of 2015, 233 out of 240 (97.1 percent) of students met the school standard for passing all PGRs. As a result of the purposeful design of the curriculum, Branford High School is able to ensure that all students achieve its 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 2 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The curriculum at Branford High School is being 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, and assessment practices that include both the use of school-wide rubrics and course-specific analytic rubrics. Prior to 2014, each department independently drafted and revised curricular documents during summer work. The process was not supervised or formally reviewed. Before the end of the 2014-2015 school year, the curriculum coordinator collected information from all departments and researched best practices to develop a common curriculum template and a common curriculum map. For the summer of 2015, the district provided professional development time for each department to facilitate the ongoing development of their written curricula. The curriculum coordinator, department chairs, and instructional coaches supervised the process and formally reviewed the work to ensure consistency. After completion of a specific unit, it is sent to the curriculum coordinator and posted on the school's curriculum website, where it is accessible to all staff.

Consistent with the district philosophy that the curriculum consist of "living documents," the English language arts (ELA) and mathematics departments are currently working with the curriculum coordinator to revise curricular units and maps. The common unit template includes a matrix that outlines essential questions, standards, content, skills, activities and instructional strategies, common assessments, content vocabulary, and school-wide and/or course-specific rubrics. When curricular documents are modified, the curriculum coordinator posts the changes online. Any changes to the curriculum, and supporting documents, are driven by student need, current research, departmental collaboration, and best practices. BHS is also revising curriculum to reflect improved integration and vertical alignment.

The curricular documents contain a variety of instructional and assessment strategies that are used throughout the school and that are designed to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. Students have numerous opportunities to demonstrate their learning through performance tasks, writing projects, presentations, projects, formative and summative assessments, and technology-based products. Teachers indicate that common assessments are used in most disciplines. The curriculum templates contain units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills.

The school intends to complete the revisions to the ELA and mathematics curriculum documents during the 2016-2017 school year for implementation during the 2017-2018 school year. Plans are in place for revision of science and social studies using the ELA and mathematics revisions as models. Thus, because the BHS curriculum is written in a common format that includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content and skills, the 21st century learning expectations, instructional strategies, and assessment practices that include school-wide rubrics and course-specific analytic rubrics, the school is able to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- department leaders

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

Standard 2 Indicator 3

Conclusions

The Branford High School curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding through inquiry, problem-solving, higher order thinking skills, authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school, and informed and ethical use of technology. Cross-disciplinary learning occurs on a more informal basis.

Higher order thinking, inquiry, and problem-solving are emphasized across the curriculum in all classes. According to the Endicott survey, 79 percent of students and 75 percent of staff believe that students are challenged to think critically. BHS provides students with additional opportunities to challenge themselves in Advanced Placement classes as well as University of Connecticut Early College Experience (ECE) classes. Freshmen and sophomores in standard classes have the choice to enroll in honors option programs in English, biology, and world languages, through which they complete additional work on an independent basis to receive honors credit.

BHS offers a cross-disciplinary class for 9th graders, Civilization and Literature, which combines English and social studies. Three examples of cross-disciplinary lessons include English 12 Honors (Historical Context for *A Tale of Two Cities*), World History (Invasive Species and the Columbian Exchange), and Spanish 4 Honors (Meso-American Mathematics). English 12 Honors and Spanish 5 Honors/ECE Latin American Studies are combining classes to read literature and complete a project on human rights in Argentina. Math and culinary arts collaborate to discover how recipes, fractions, elapsed time, and the processes of measuring and baking are related. Most cross-disciplinary learning occurs on an informal basis.

Students in a special education program visit stores and learn to appropriately ask for job applications. Power technology students perform oil changes on faculty-owned vehicles. Culinary arts classes cater events and run a daily faculty cafe. Child development students interact with children of faculty members in an early childhood learning setting. Teachers also incorporate authentic experiences into the classroom in different ways, such as skyping with Mexican students to practice Spanish. Various field trips are embedded within courses to provide a broader, richer experience of the subject, such as a trip to Quebec for students to authentically practice French. A choir trip to Italy gave students the opportunity to see professional performers and to sing for an audience themselves. Students who went on a trip to Spain were first prepared for travel by learning specific vocabulary and facts about Spanish history and culture, and then were asked to give presentations to their Spanish classes upon their return. All seniors are required to complete a capstone graduation project in which they establish goals, create a plan to accomplish them, implement the project, and evaluate what they have accomplished and learned from the experience. When students are seniors, they are also given an opportunity to do a work internship for the last month of school, providing them with real-life work experience and training in a field in which they are interested. Many authentic learning opportunities are provided, although some students seem unaware of them.

Curricular documents include a variety of technological applications that reinforce responsible and ethical practices. Teachers incorporate the use of technology into assignments, such as having students embed hyperlinks into a sonnet linking words to related images or videos, creating a powerpoint presentation on Renaissance art using the medium to help display the details of the painting, and using Google Docs to help students collaborate on group projects. Some professional development offerings support teachers in their utilization of technology to streamline learning; Edmodo and Google Classroom are used to provide updates and assign work. The school's technology PGR is used in some classes to assess student growth in regards to the informed and ethical use of technology. The library media specialist instructs all freshmen in information literacy and ethical use of technology. In addition, advisory addresses the ethical use of technology.

As a result, the Branford High School curriculum emphasizes inquiry and problem-solving, higher order thinking skills, and authentic learning, and when it places a more formal emphasis upon cross-disciplinary learning and provides students increased awareness of opportunities for authentic learning, it can ensure even greater depth of understanding and application of knowledge for all students.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 2 Indicator 4

Conclusions

The written curriculum at Branford High School has been frequently aligned with the taught curriculum. The most recent modifications to the taught curriculum are still being incorporated into the newly designed curriculum format. Curriculum development and implementation is an ongoing process at Branford High School. The recent provision of common planning time in most disciplines provides many teachers increased opportunities for collaboration in the review of student work and the development of common assessments. During formal common planning time, teachers in science, mathematics, and ELA collaborate to align changes in instructional practices with modifications to the written curriculum. In science, mathematics, and ELA instructional coaches oversee the work of those cohorts. While disciplines such as world languages, fine and applied arts, social studies, and special education are not overseen formally by instructional coaches, teachers in those areas have been working informally and independently to align their taught and written curriculum.

Although the administration does not collect lesson plans on a regular basis, plans are reviewed during all formal and informal observations. At mid-year and at the end of the year, building administrators conduct formal reviews of practices for all teachers. Administrators and teachers review student work, common formative assessments (CFA) and student learning objectives (SLO). Similarities across departments and classes are used as evidence of consistency in delivery of instruction. As part of the review process, lessons are analyzed for their alignment with curriculum and standards. Indirect monitoring of alignment is also evident through the development and implementation of departmental common assessments. This work is completed in scheduled meetings between the curriculum coordinator, department leaders, and teachers. In addition, teachers, instructional coaches, and the curriculum coordinator indicate that all teachers in math and ELA have been involved in the curriculum writing process ensuring that all teachers have input and are familiar with the written curriculum. The school plans to have all teachers become involved in the development of departmental written curriculum. Therefore, when Branford High School's alignment of written and taught curriculum is complete, the school will be better able to ensure that all students achieve the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 2 Indicator 5

Conclusions

Effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation at Branford High School is a work in progress. Facilitated by a district-wide consultant and assisted by instructional coaches, a vertically aligned model curriculum is currently underway in mathematics and ELA. The model will be the basis for creation of revised curriculum for social studies, science, and all other disciplines. The daily school schedule provides teachers in most departments common planning time. Teachers hold weekly meetings to create common assessments and lessons. A common planning area set aside in the teacher work room facilitates both formal and informal discussions among teachers in various disciplines. A process to increase vertical articulation between the middle school and the high school has begun in the content areas of English, math, and world languages. Additionally, some teachers participate in cross-curricular learning walks that allow them to see what is happening in other classrooms and to then discuss their observations with the principal.

The curriculum coordinator is overseeing the vertical alignment of math and ELA curriculum for K-12. Transfer goals have been included for each grade level and each high school course. Once finished, these guides will serve as effective models of curriculum coordination and vertical articulation for the creation of curriculum in other disciplines. The curriculum coordinator and the instructional coaches oversee and update the curriculum website which is accessible to all staff members. Thus, when curricular coordination and vertical articulation between and among all academic areas as well as the Walsh Intermediate School are completed, BHS will be better able to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 2 Indicator 6

Conclusions

The staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center at Branford High School are sufficient in most areas to fully implement the curriculum. According to the Strategic School Profile, BHS class sizes vary, with an average of 21 students per class. Staffing has been supplemented by the inclusion of instructional coaches in mathematics, science, and ELA. Co-curricular enrichment activities are numerous. Many provide a paid stipend to faculty advisors. Results from the Endicott survey show that 83.7 percent of students feel strongly supported with instructional materials. Faculty and staff report sufficient instructional materials, appropriate technology, equipment and supplies to fully implement the curriculum. Internet access has been updated to improve wireless connectivity throughout the building. Recently BHS added 270 Chromebooks. The school has also added fiber optic cable and nineteen new access points. BHS also upgraded wireless access in the commons area to accommodate individual student needs.

BHS recently renovated the library/media center. The school removed outdated print and video materials and reconfigured the large space to better support collaborative work. The center installed two stations for students to create visual presentations. The renovated space also provides students greater access to online learning opportunities. The library/media center has sufficient print and non-print resources to fully implement the curriculum.

Despite sufficient support of staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, and supplies, some teachers express concern about a lack of dedicated storage space for curricular and co-curricular activities.

According to the Endicott survey, 68.4 percent of staff members feel that the school facility fully supports the implementation of the curriculum, including co-curricular programs, and other learning opportunities. Staff members report a need for more storage and space in several departments, improvements to the locker room area, more consistent use of working copiers in the faculty room, and increased access to technological resources to supplement the curriculum. As a result of appropriate staffing levels, sufficient instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities and resources of the library/media center, Branford High School is able to fully implement the curriculum to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 2 Indicator 7

Conclusions

The Branford school 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. Academic disciplines use a variety of standards to guide alignment of the curriculum. Mathematics and English use the Common Core State Standards. Teachers in social studies use the College, Career and Civic Life Framework (C3). The science department uses the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). World languages teachers use standards developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). The fine and practical arts department uses the National Core Arts Standards (NCAS). Teachers in all disciplines have attended content-specific professional development to gain a deeper understanding of their standards. This process has been underway for approximately five years, but refined and put into formal documents during the last two years.

The assistant superintendent, curriculum coordinator, instructional coaches, department leaders, and teachers meet to review K-12 curriculum alignment throughout the year in vertical teams. At the building level, the curriculum coordinator, department leaders, and teachers are responsible for the development and revision of the curriculum. The curriculum coordinator is currently working with instructional coaches and professional staff to review and revise curriculum for math and ELA. Each week common planning time is used for curriculum development. Every department member has the opportunity to provide input. Instructional coaches assist teachers in using assessment data and current research to drive curriculum. For example, in the geometry cohort, the math coach and teachers review common assessments and discuss connections to current research. Mathematics teachers report that the instructional coach provides research and feedback in the process of curriculum revision.

Branford High School is currently working on the vertical alignment of the curricula in mathematics and ELA facilitated by a district-wide consultant. The model curriculum will be the basis for creation of revised curriculum for social studies and science, followed by all other disciplines. Mathematics and ELA currently have full-day release time three to four times per semester to meet with the curriculum consultant and teachers from Walsh Intermediate School to revise and update curriculum. In addition, the mathematics, social studies, and science departments administer common assessments over time and have begun to use data to inform curriculum development. BHS developed most of the mathematics and science curricula recently during summer work in 2015. As a result of the district's provision of sufficient personnel, time and financial resources for the ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research, BHS is able to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 2 Commendations

Commendation

The curriculum that is purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations

Commendation

The curriculum that 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, and assessment practices that include the use of specific and measurable criteria for success

Commendation

The curriculum that emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through inquiry and problem-solving, higher order thinking, authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school, and informed and ethical use of technology

Commendation

The inclusion of common planning time and the implementation of the instructional coaching model to provide effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation between and among academic areas at the school

Commendation

The provision of adequate staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the sufficient resources of the library/media center to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular and other learning opportunities

Commendation

The provision to the school's professional staff of sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research

Standard 2 Recommendations

Recommendation

Develop and implement a plan to emphasize depth of understanding and application of knowledge through increased cross-disciplinary learning

Recommendation

Develop and implement a plan to increase student awareness of authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school

Recommendation

Develop and implement a plan to ensure clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum in all disciplines

Recommendation

Develop and implement a plan to ensure vertical curriculum articulation between BHS and the Walsh Intermediate School

Recommendation

Develop and implement a plan to provide adequate storage of curricular and co-curricular materials

Standard 3 Indicator 1

Conclusions

Teachers' instructional practices are continuously examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations. Teachers collaborate both formally and informally as a community and in small groups to ensure that these values, beliefs, and learning expectations are integrated into instructional practices through department meetings, community and academic standards (CASC) meetings, TalentEd teacher evaluations, learning walks, department collaboration time, and instructional coaching cohort meetings. The instructional coaching model in the science, mathematics, and English departments, for example, facilitates this examination. In mathematics, teachers self-select cohorts and work with the instructional coach to increase rigor in word problems to foster critical thinking and transference of skills across units of study. Teachers also work with their cohorts to embed choices for students in each course. For example, teachers of Algebra II have developed lessons in which students collaborate to present their final projects to the class. Teachers in all departments routinely provide students with opportunities to meet the school's academic expectations. For example, in Civilizations class, students routinely read and annotate primary sources and respond to document-based questions. In a Horizons social studies class, students researched and made presentations about different neighborhoods in their hometown and discussed the diverse features in each. Students in Biology classes maintain interactive science notebooks. They write extended responses and reflections after each unit of study. Students in history classes work in groups using websites to identify various countries' gross domestic products and exports, and then assess how leadership styles in these countries affect their economies. Also, the library/media specialist teaches students how to identify appropriate websites for research. Students must demonstrate appropriate and effective use of technology. Teachers also provide students with a number of opportunities to achieve the school's civic and social expectations. Teachers in the Horizons program provide all students with individualized attention to foster students' self-respect and respect for their fellow students. Small class sizes and frequent check-in conferences with students facilitate this practice. Horizons and physical education teachers take students into the community on field trips to the local library, a state park, and a local CrossFit gym. Teachers also promote students' understanding of the benefits of diversity through events such as the annual parade of nations, and student organizations such as the Young Women's Club, and the Amnesty International Club, which promotes awareness of international issues. Professional development is driven by the Branford Public Schools Instructional Framework, best practices, the mission statement, and professional growth and evaluation conferences. In recent years, teachers have participated in professional development modules such as "Creating a Reflective Classroom for Students," "Formative and Summative Assessments," "Transitioning a Classroom to a Student-Centered Environment," "Turn-it In" workshop support from creating to advanced features, and "Using Tangible Historical Artifacts to Enhance a Curriculum." As a result of teachers' continuous examination of instructional practices, instruction at Branford High School is consistent with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

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

- Standard sub-committee

Standard 3 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Branford High School 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. Occasionally instructional practices engage students in cross-disciplinary learning.

BHS teachers frequently personalize instruction. A ninth-grade biology teacher meets individually with students on Fridays to review students' notebooks and to help them set goals for future weeks. Mathematics teachers use activity stations that allow students to work at their own pace. In world languages classes, teachers set up a variety of activities to ensure students have an opportunity to meet with the teacher individually. In many courses teachers provide novels of different reading levels. Teachers generate discussion questions to meet individual student needs and abilities. In Algebra I, students progress through group activities at their own pace and assess themselves based on checkpoints provided by the teachers as well as through peer review. In Occupational Foods, students receive personalized instruction in various aspects of cooking that help them to achieve personal as well as academic goals.

BHS teachers frequently engage students as active and self-directed learners. In American Literature, students engage in self-directed learning by producing videos to show their understanding of themes in *The Great Gatsby*. Students in applied arts classes, including jewelry making and woodworking complete self-directed projects and engage in hands-on learning. Teachers often provide students opportunities to work at their own pace, self-check for accuracy, and advance to the next activity level only when they are ready through the use of activity stations. Science teachers incorporate active learning in lab assignments, using kinesthetic movements to model protein synthesis. Students present arguments and defend their positions in self-directed, lively classroom debates. Students choose their own project topics, progress at their own pace, and present results in a format of their own choosing.

Instructional practices emphasize inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking. English teachers engage students in higher order thinking by including historical research components with literary analysis. In social studies and other departments, students conduct research and are required to analyze the validity of sources and support a position by considering multiple viewpoints in order to demonstrate an understanding of the complex issues.

Students apply knowledge to authentic tasks in the discrete mathematics class by using Hamiltonian circuits to plot routes for their college-search destinations, and in the Horizons department, students in English class write original found poetry based on the novel *Of Mice and Men*. Students also apply skills to authentic tasks by writing fifty lines of unique code to design video games. Seniors design and complete a capstone project in which they plan, execute, reflect on their own learning, and present to community members. In science labs, students perform authentic tasks such as connecting their lives to potential/kinetic energy. They conduct labs that address potential real-world issues such as acid rain or focus on genetic/medical technological advancements and their impact on society. In world languages, students research artwork from a museum in Paris, create a description in their own words in French, and then act out a skit as though they are walking through the museum commenting on the artwork.

Students routinely engage in self-assessment and reflection, including in Chorus class when, after full-group rehearsals, students self-assess their performance on each song and note steps to make improvements. In recent years many teachers have learned and implemented new strategies for self-assessment within the

classroom. Teachers are asking students frequently to reflect on their performance in both formal and informal ways. In the Endicott survey, 69.6 percent of students agree that their teachers provide them with opportunities to assess their work. Students are provided opportunities during advisory to reflect on their performance during previous quarters and are asked to set goals for themselves.

Some teachers engage students in cross-disciplinary learning. For example art and Spanish teachers have done a unit together on indigenous cultures. Teachers express a need for more formalized partnerships. In the Horizons department, science teachers use projects and lessons that connect to mathematics through the study of quasar analysis. In the mathematics department students complete a group assignment that introduces the concept of linear patterns by comparing them to hydrocarbons on Titan, Saturn's largest moon. Some cross-disciplinary learning occurs in Civilization and Literature, a ninth grade class that combines language arts and social studies. Occupational Foods includes concepts from both business management and culinary arts. The library/media specialist and science teachers coordinate with social studies, science, and English classes to scaffold research skills for all ninth graders. This instruction culminates with a formal research project at the end of the school year.

There are numerous opportunities for teachers to integrate technology into instructional practices. There are approximately one computer lab and/or laptop cart per department. The library/media center offers universal Chromebook and iPad carts in the library, as well as a library lab and additional computers throughout the building. The school also recently increased wireless access points to support a broader bring-your-own-device policy and to increase use of technology in classrooms, although teachers still report problems with accessing wireless connections consistently. The library has two five-person collaboration tables so that students can simultaneously work together and engage in a free flowing exchange of ideas and information. According to the Endicott survey, 74 percent of students agree that they use technology in their assignments. Most departments encourage the use of technology for research, presentations, and communication. Several teachers use polling apps and websites such as Socrative and Poll Everywhere to inform instruction. Science and math use technology for graphing, simulating, and data analysis. Chemistry, Physics, and Anatomy and Physiology use LoggerPro to collect and analyze live data. Teachers in AP Biology and AP Chemistry use Molecular Workbench as simulation exercises. The math department has access to Winplot, Sketch, Netglobs, Wingeom, and scientific graphing calculator programs. Fine and practical arts department integrates technology in most courses, such as Graphic Design, Gaming, Drafting, and Hands-On Engineering. Teachers use technology during instruction as well as outside the classroom to teach students how to organize and analyze information, blog, and provide feedback to each other through applications such as Edmodo and Google Classroom.

As a result, teachers' instructional practices at Branford High School support most students' progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. When instructional practices place even greater emphasis upon cross-disciplinary learning, BHS will be even better able to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 3 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Teachers routinely adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by using using formative assessment, especially during instructional time; strategically differentiating instruction, purposefully organizing group learning activities, and providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom. A majority of teachers across content areas use formative assessment during instructional time. For example, entrance and exit slips, and other warm-up and practice assessments take place during class so that teachers can adjust instructional practices based on student need. Mathematics teachers review work in a whole-class environment on the document camera, focusing on errors to help reinforce concepts and generate strategies for coming to solutions. World languages teachers use daily warm-ups based on thematic units related to daily objectives while assessing prior knowledge and skill acquisition from previous lessons. Sometimes students act as teachers and call on classmates to solicit answers. Ceramic students reflect upon the construction stage of their ceramic pieces. They use and apply course vocabulary words as they reflect. The reflections provide formative assessment of student knowledge of course vocabulary. In the 2015-2016 school year, the instructional coach for science worked with small groups of teachers in specific courses to develop new formative assessments that created the basis for modification and lesson adjustments. In the Lifetime Fitness class, students create personalized workouts based on their physical strengths.

Several teachers use strategic differentiation in their classes to accommodate the needs of individual students. Teachers have access to the Branford High School wiki which contains multiple resources for differentiation and literacy interventions as well as links to graphic organizers, vocabulary building activities, concept maps, and various other tools. Of 95 teachers surveyed, 82, or 86.3 percent, agree that teachers use differentiated instructional practices to meet the learning needs of all students. One French class, for example, is composed of four different levels. Teachers assign students two versions of *Les Miserables* to accommodate varied linguistic abilities. English teachers give students individual choice to select books to review. Teachers meet with each student before making summative assessments. In Integrated Mathematics, teachers administered four different versions of a quiz to meet the needs of students exhibiting varying levels of achievement.

In Video Production the teacher organizes group-learning activities in class by having students work in production companies and conduct peer critiques in groups. In the Horizons program, teachers facilitate the development of social and emotional skills, in addition to academics, within classes of fewer than ten students. Teachers purposefully organize classes according to students' range of academic and social needs. These teachers plan special programs and projects including field trips and career preparation. In Biology, teachers group students according to student learning needs, ability levels, behavior/learning style, or grade level. English teachers group students with similar or different needs for development of writing skills. Students edit and review their work for specific criteria prior to exchanging with another group for feedback. One teacher in English 9 used results of a pre-assessment based on student understanding of developing higher order questions to purposefully group students based on learning needs and then provide small group instruction. Mathematics teachers group students according to varying levels of ability or by the concept being taught. Teachers in world languages group students according to levels of ability or personality types to work on short translations, conjugations, and role-playing activities.

Some teachers provide additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom. For example, in 9th grade Civilizations, a teacher noted that students were unable to summarize the main points of a primary source document. The teacher created small group and whole-class interventions to provide feedback, practice, and reinforcement. Follow-up assessment showed improvement with these skills for summarizing. In English 9, a teacher noted that students were unable to generate discussion questions exhibiting higher order thinking. The teacher taught students about Bloom's taxonomy and students revised their discussion questions. Mathematics

students use graphing calculators or applications rather than algebraic techniques, when appropriate, to solve problems. Teachers also provide various support mechanisms such as graphic organizers, group-learning activities, product exemplars, or teacher notes for students who need additional support. Students taking Web Design have access to tutorials that provide alternative demonstrations of the task at hand. In Biology students determined their own learning style. Students were then able to choose work stations according to their learning style. Stations included manipulatives, playing matching games, and explaining the processes with a partner. As a result, Branford High School teachers adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student and ensure that students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 3 Indicator 4

Conclusions

Branford High School 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, examining current research, and engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice. BHS added instructional coaches at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year to help facilitate departmental collaboration in mathematics and science. Teachers in those departments routinely review achievement data to modify instruction. Eighty-two percent of teachers reported on the Endicott survey that they use student achievement data to improve instruction. As part of the teacher evaluation process, data is reviewed during goal setting, mid-year, and end-of-the-year reflections. Teachers independently use benchmark data to plan and inform instruction and analyze their daily classroom data to make adjustments. In Honors Chemistry, students completed a pre-assessment on a dimensional analysis. They attained significantly low results. Teachers adjusted instruction with guided and independent practice, work in collaborative groups, and self-, peer-, and teacher-assessments. Students achieved higher results on the summative assessments. In Algebra I students took a pre-assessment on patterns. Some students demonstrated limited skills in graphing a linear pattern. The teacher used this data to adjust his instruction in order to meet individual students' needs. On the mid-unit assessment, these students all showed improvement in graphing skills, but some showed difficulty with labeling and defining the variable. The teacher subsequently used this new data to guide future instruction, and on the end-of-unit assessment, all students showed improvement.

Teachers in cohorts frequently examine student work with three primary areas of focus: general observations, trends in student data, and implications for instruction. Biology teachers continue to revise their discipline-specific rubrics, discussing among themselves how best to phrase the indicators based on feedback from their students. Teachers in the English department use feedback from interest surveys given to students in English 9 and 10 classes to develop performance-based assessments in these classes. A mathematics teacher struggling with classroom management issues worked closely with the department coach, using her feedback to develop effective, ultimately successful strategies.

Teachers use feedback from supervisors to improve instructional practices based on mini-observations and goal meetings throughout the year. According to the Endicott survey, teachers do not routinely gather feedback formally from students and parents. Forty percent of students state that teachers ask for ideas and opinions and 25 percent of students state that they are asked for feedback about instructional practices. Sometimes teachers ask students to reflect on what they liked or did not like about a lab or project, or what learning strategy they prefer. Teachers informally obtain feedback from parents through parent conferences, phone calls, and emails. Teachers do not routinely seek formal feedback from parents to improve instructional practices.

Teachers examine current research, typically provided by instructional coaches and the school's library/media specialist. This study typically occurs during cohort meetings. They participate in professional development, attend conferences, and read professional journals. Members of administration and faculty often share articles about best practices. In an informal survey, fifty teachers identified specific professional associations to which they belong (NCSS, NCATE, COLT) and conferences they have attended. Teachers share new learning informally and at professional development sessions.

Teachers engage in professional discourse focused on instructional practice in a variety of venues. A district-wide consultant has worked with English 9 and 10 teachers to develop essential questions for instructional units that align with standards. The cohorts that meet during common planning periods afford teachers frequent opportunities to discuss instructional practices. Teachers also meet with administrators as part of the annual evaluation process. During these sessions teachers receive helpful feedback about how to continuously improve

instruction. Teachers in the Horizons program routinely meet as a team to address the evolving needs of their students on a whole-group and individual level. Seventy-three percent of teachers indicated in the Endicott Survey that they improve their instructional practices by engaging in formal opportunities for professional discourse. Teachers meet in departments and interdisciplinary groups to review instructional practices during professional development sessions and on scheduled early release days. Recent professional development gatherings have included topics such as common assessments, rigor, active learning, close reading protocols, creating a student-centered classroom, creating a reflective classroom, and implementing formative assessments. Thus, BHS teachers are collaborative and reflective about their instructional strategies and when they also incorporate more formal feedback from students and parents, they will be better able to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 3 Indicator 5

Conclusions

Teachers at Branford High School, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, consciously and deliberately maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. According to the Endicott survey, 78.8 percent of students, 78.9 percent of teachers, and 76.1 percent of parents agree that teachers are knowledgeable about their subject matter and maintain their expertise. Fifty teachers responded to an informal school survey requesting information about course work, association memberships, and conferences. Forty-three teachers belong to one or more professional associations and over 80 percent stated they follow websites, blogs, and professional learning communities online, or read professional journals. Twenty-six stated they attended workshops related to their content area between 2013 and 2015. District-provided opportunities include regular professional development embedded in the school calendar. In addition, members of some departments serve on district vertical teams and other committees, such as teacher professional growth and evaluation, and serve as Connecticut Teacher Education and Mentoring Program (TEAM) mentors for beginning teachers and student teachers. In the math, science, and English departments, the instructional coaches' role includes selecting, distributing, and leading discussions about current research material. Several teachers have participated as members of NEASC visiting teams. Teachers also are formally trained through TEAM to serve as mentors for new teachers and student teachers. Teachers have traveled on their own time to places like China, Scotland, Central America, Russia, Native American Reservations, and shared their experiences with the students and other faculty members. Teachers engage in continuous and thought-provoking conversations centered around instructional practices and innovative educational ideas for the classroom. For example, the geometry cohort meets on a weekly basis to review homework assignments and to discuss assessment of student work. Instructional coaches participate in on-going training to promote conversations about instructional practices, differentiation, and higher order thinking. Teachers engage students as active and self-directed learners, emphasizing higher order thinking and inquiry based problem solving. As a result, teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices to ensure the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school board
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 3 Commendations

Commendation

The teachers' continuous examination of their instructional practices that consistently support the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations

Commendation

The teachers' instructional practices that support achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by personalizing instruction, engaging students as active and self-directed learner, 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

Commendation

The teachers' adjustment of instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by using formative assessment, especially during instructional time, strategically differentiating, purposefully organizing group learning activities, and providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom

Commendation

The teachers' individual and collaborative improvement of their instructional practices by using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments, examining student work, using feedback for other teachers and supervisors, examining current research, and engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice

Commendation

The teachers' maintenance, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, of expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices

Standard 3 Recommendations

Recommendation

Create and implement a plan to engage students in cross-disciplinary learning to support achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations

Recommendation

Create and implement a plan to improve teachers' instructional practices by using feedback from students and parents

Recommendation

Standard 4 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The professional staff continuously employs a formal process to assess individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations based on specific and measurable criteria for success and is in the early stages of developing a formal process to assess whole-school progress. The school currently measures these expectations with five performance graduation requirements (PGRs) in addition to a community service expectation and a capstone project. There is a formal process and separate rubrics that assess the senior capstone project. In order to excel on their capstone project, students must demonstrate that they have learned autonomously and collaboratively, used critical thinking skills, and made a global connection to their project. Branford High School (BHS) has revised the PGRs to align them with the Common Core State Standards. The revised PGRs provide students with consistent expectations based on language used in all of their courses. BHS uses the PGRs to measure individual student achievement of the 21st century skills across the curriculum. The most recent revisions were made during the 2013-2014 school year with input from the community and academic standards committee (CASC) in conjunction with school administration and faculty. BHS implemented the revised PGRs during the 2014-2015 school year. PGRs, listed in The Guide and the program of studies, are benchmarks for measuring progress toward achieving 21st century skills in reading, writing, use of technology, communication skills, and critical thinking skills. They are assessed on a 1-4 scale with three being proficient. According to the Endicott survey, 75 percent of BHS staff report that they understand the formal process, based on the use of school-wide analytic rubrics, to assess school and individual student progress in achieving learning expectations. However, only 55.8 percent of the faculty report using the school-wide analytic rubrics when assessing student work on individual assignments. A variety of courses aligned with various PGRs, give students numerous opportunities to achieve the expectations across the curriculum over the course of their four years. Teachers record students' PGR ratings on their semester report cards and provide a final PGR transcript upon graduation. A student's highest rating earned is recorded on this final PGR transcript. Many students are unaware of how teachers use rubrics to assess PGRs in their regular coursework. Teachers indicate that there is no formal collaboration on how to use the rubrics to assess PGRs. Administrators pointed out the need for further formal efforts to coordinate teacher use of the school-wide rubrics. While the report cards show students' progress rated by teachers' use of the rubrics, students are not clear on how these scores measured their progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. BHS has yet to address school-wide progress. As a result, BHS has a formal process to assess student progress in achieving 21st century learning expectations. When the school fully implements a process to evaluate school-wide progress on achievement of the 21 century learning expectations and coordinates teacher use of the rubrics to assess individual student achievement, BHS will be better able to measure whole-school and individual student achievement of its 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- department leaders
- school leadership

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

Standard 4 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Branford High School's professional staff communicates individual student progress in achieving each of the 21st century learning expectations to students and their families. BHS is in the early stages of developing a process to communicate whole-school progress to the community. BHS refers to 21st century learning expectations as performance graduation requirements (PGRs). Parents have access to The Guide which specifically describes the PGRs. The Guide states, "To graduate from BHS, students are expected to earn the required credits as well as achieve an average rating of 3 on each of the five PGRs." Although the Gradebook is open throughout the school year, parents have access to PGR ratings through the parent portal to Infinite Campus/Open Gradebook at the end of each semester. Report cards, if requested, are sent home and contain the PGR ratings. Upon graduation, students receive a PGR transcript with their highest scores in the five PGRs. Teachers have access to their students' current posted grades through Infinite Campus. PGRs are accessible at the end of each semester through Infinite Campus as well. Teachers only have information about students' quarter grades and PGRs for the year they teach the student when report cards become available. Guidance counselors review PGR ratings at the end of each semester to determine if students need to make course changes in order to meet a particular PGRs. Case managers for special education students follow student progress with the PGRs. A formal review process is in place to determine if it is appropriate to waive a given PGR if it is related to a student's specific disability. Teachers communicate with parents and students continuously through Infinite Campus, an online grading portal. Teachers, parents, and students have access to individual academic progress at all times. BHS is moving toward analyzing whole-school progress on PGRs, but does not currently have a formal process in place. As a result, BHS communicates individual student progress in achieving each of the 21st century learning expectations to families and students, but has yet to develop and implement a process to communicate school-wide progress to the school community.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- parents
- department leaders
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Professional staff at Branford High School (BHS) collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement. Teachers systematically disaggregate data to make improvements in instructional practices and to use the results of common assessments to create plans that respond to inequities in student achievement. As part of the teacher evaluation process, teachers at Branford High School develop a student learning objective (SLO) based on a department developed pre-assessment and then collect data on related student progress throughout the year. Teachers review student work which has been assessed using course and discipline-specific rubrics. Teachers work with administrators to monitor and modify instruction based on student performance on mid-year assignments in year-long courses. Teachers are required to create a plan for responding to different levels of achievement. At the end of the year, the teachers and administrators review student progress. World languages teachers administer common listening assessments at every level of instruction three times per year. Their analysis of results helps them to identify areas of student weakness and to modify instruction. Ninth and tenth grade English teachers have developed benchmark common assessments and have begun to use data to improve instruction. Civilizations and U.S. History teachers work with the 5-12 curriculum coordinator to disaggregate data collected from various common assessments given throughout the school year and use this data to drive instruction and identify inequities. With the disaggregation of data, teachers are aware of weaknesses on both the class and individual student level. The curriculum coordinator has provided instructional strategies for teachers to use to increase student success and address identified weaknesses. The mathematics and a science instructional coaches have been helping teachers to analyze and respond to inequities in student achievement by suggesting strategies such as purposeful grouping and assessing students' comprehension by using various levels of texts. English, mathematics, science, and social studies teachers assess students on skills and standards related to the teachers' SLOs. Teachers collect data on a shared spreadsheet so that teachers of common subjects can collaboratively and individually analyze the data and use it to make decisions on how to improve student achievement. This approach to data collection, analysis, and modification of instruction to respond to inequities in student achievement is emerging across the curriculum. Guidance counselors identify appropriate students for freshman academy or freshman seminar based on data from sending schools. For the past two years, the BHS principal and faculty on the intervention team have reviewed standardized reading scores from the 8th grade administration of the Blue Ribbon Reading test, students' final grade in 8th grade language arts, and student performance on an 8th grade common writing assessment. Students who fall below an identified score in all areas are assigned to Access Learning Lab, an every-other-day intervention class which was piloted in the 2014-2015 school year and further developed in the 2015-2016 school year. BHS defined the data review process further during the 2015-2016 school year with the development of ASSIST (accessing structured school-wide interventions and strategies team), a group comprised of the science and mathematics instructional coaches, the school social worker, the speech and language pathologist, the dean of students, a guidance counselor, and the Access Learning Lab teacher. The team meets at least twice weekly to review data and plan related interventions for students in need of support. One focus of the team is to routinely and systematically disaggregate and/or monitor data related to student performance. A review of all students' grade point averages occurs at the conclusion of every marking period. More frequent reviews are conducted both for students who have been referred for services and have formal intervention plans in place, as well as for students who receive Tier 2 intervention support through Access Learning Lab. BHS monitors grade point average, grades, and assignment completion as recorded in Infinite Campus Gradebook and with teacher input. BHS has developed rubrics to determine when students should enter and exit from formalized services, and a plan is in place to provide check-in support for at least one quarter for students who exit Access Learning Lab so that students are not prematurely dismissed from formal services. Parents are notified at each step in the process. Additionally, ASSIST is in the process of developing further school-wide interventions. Although ASSIST reviews quarterly data on all students at BHS, intervention through Access Learning Lab is currently available to ninth and tenth graders. As a result, the professional staff collects,

disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 4

Conclusions

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. Branford High School faculty communicate the unit-specific learning goals to be assessed prior to the beginning of each unit and course. All course descriptions given to students at the beginning of the year or semester list the essential questions and related performance graduation requirements for that course. This information is also available in course syllabi. Essential questions are posted in the front of most classrooms for science, social studies, English, and world languages. Teachers provide students with unit overviews including learning goals for each unit of study. Teachers often write or project the daily lesson objective on the board. Many classes in the science, world languages, physical education and food technology departments use pre-tests to assess prior knowledge and communicate to the students what information will be taught in the unit. As a result, prior to each unit of study, students are aware of the applicable 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific goals to be assessed.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- department leaders
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 5

Conclusions

Prior to summative assessments, teachers provide students with specific and measurable rubrics which define targeted high levels of achievement. In English language learners (ELL) classes teachers use response rubrics. Social studies teachers use specific criteria for success in document-based questions. Teachers from each department collaborate in creating department-specific common assessments with rubrics to assess students' progress. According to the Endicott survey, 71 percent of students understand in advance what work they have to accomplish to meet their teachers' expectations. Also 71 percent of students agree that teachers use rubrics to assess their work. Teachers often work together to revise rubrics after analyzing student progress. These rubrics often mirror the related PGR expectations so teachers can rate individual student progress throughout the semester. Thus, because prior to summative assessments teachers provide students with specific and measurable criteria for success which define targeted high levels of achievement, students have a clear understanding of the expectations of their teachers.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 6

Conclusions

In each unit of study, teachers employ a range of formative and summative assessment strategies. According to the Endicott survey 92.6 percent of the staff agree or strongly agree that teachers use a variety and range of assessment strategies including formative and summative assessments. Students in every grade take midterm and final exams. Students respond to prompts on the Socrative application or participate in a class polling game using an application such as Kahoot. Students in the Lifetime Fitness class create their own workout plan. Social studies teachers use document-based questions (DBQ) and analysis of data from websites to look at gross domestic product and imports and exports to draw conclusions about a given country's economy. Common summative assessments take place at the end of the unit and at the end of the semester. Teachers often ask questions for students to respond to on a whiteboard in class. Students do a 3-2-1 formative assessment as an exit slip. English 9 students use the sketch-to-stretch strategy. Grades 11 and 12 students complete a common CPR exam in Health class. Drawing and painting students complete a portfolio. English essays include a rough drafts and final copy as well as a drawing with related textual evidence. Civilizations and Literature students complete a research paper. Students select a piece of art and corresponding piece of literature. Biology students develop a product to persuade the audience to label or not to label genetically modified foods. As a result of using a wide range of formative and summative assessments, BHS is able to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- department leaders
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 7

Conclusions

Teachers collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments. According to the Endicott survey, 75.8 percent of Branford High School teachers report that they meet formally to discuss and improve both formative and summative assessments. In the past, BHS allotted formal collaboration time during the school day on a weekly rotating basis. The school instituted common planning time for cohorts of teachers during the 2015-2016 school year. Most teachers of English 9, English 10, Civilizations, Algebra I, Biology, Chemistry, Exploratory Science, Physiology and Life Science were given common planning periods to allow for collaboration. Science teachers develop and implement new rubrics to better analyze summative assessments. The grades 5-12 curriculum coordinator conducts formal meetings with some English and social studies teachers to review the results of common assessments designed to meet the needs of students in areas targeted from the results of common pre-assessment data. The math and science instructional coaches meet with teachers in their departments once per week during common planning time to plan and evaluate common assessments. As a result of the formal collaboration on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments, BHS is able to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 8

Conclusions

Teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work. The style of corrective feedback and the manner of revisions vary across disciplines and among faculty members. BHS expects all classroom teachers to submit assessment scores into Infinite Campus within ten days of the date that an assessment is given. According to the Endicott survey, 66.1 percent of students agree that their teachers assessed/corrected student work in a reasonable amount of time. The survey also indicates that 65.4 percent of students agree that their teachers offer suggestions to help improve their school work. Students produce various forms of revisions based upon corrective feedback. Students use corrective feedback to produce corrected versions of their written work and final drafts. English teachers regularly employ instructional strategies such as peer editing, scaffolding, modeling, and conferencing. Mathematics and science teachers provide timely corrective feedback to clarify concepts and to ready students for future assessments. Teachers encourage students to revise written work for an improved grade once corrective feedback and peer review has taken place. The mathematics department allows students to retake unit tests if a student scores below 70 percent. Prior to retaking the assessment, teachers require students to meet with them individually. Teachers then average the original unit test grade with the grade from the retake. As a result, the provision of specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work enables BHS to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- department leaders
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 9

Conclusions

Teachers at BHS regularly use formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning. According to the Endicott survey, 93 percent of teachers report that they adjust their instruction by regularly using formative assessment to meet the learning needs of all students. On a daily basis teachers improve the effectiveness of their instruction by frequently checking for understanding in the classroom. Teachers employ formative assessments such as discussions, common assessments, performance tasks, entrance and exit slips, practice problems, thumb voting responses, quick-writes, KWL charts and 3-2-1 slips. Students work in groups to complete a task and answer questions on white boards. On a weekly basis, teachers use reflection assignments, lab reports, and active reading assignments to monitor student. Students gain understanding of their academic strengths and weaknesses. Teachers use these assessments to inform and modify curriculum and instruction. Thus, teachers' regular use of formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning enables BHS to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- department leaders
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 10

Conclusions

Teachers and administrators frequently examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice including 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, and data from sending schools. BHS has yet to formally examine data from surveys of current students, receiving schools, or alumni. Each department uses at least two common assessments throughout the year. Teachers develop student learning objectives (SLOs) based on data gathered from common pre-assessments administered in all courses. Teachers use common planning time to analyze common assessments and to examine student work to modify curriculum and to improve instructional practices. Mathematics teachers added more instructional time to Algebra classes based upon an examination of student need. Instructional coaching meetings, department meetings, common planning time for teachers of the same course, and release time provide opportunities for teachers to share and analyze data gathered from common assessments. Prior to the implementation of coach meetings, math teachers met monthly by course to analyze test results and to plan future units based on student performance. Learning strategies teachers now incorporate specific lessons on transition into their lessons and administer a common transition post-assessment after analyzing pre-assessment data on students' knowledge related to their transition from high school to college or employment. The results of the assessments are also used to create transition goals and objectives as part of students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Since 2013-2014, all tenth and eleventh grade students have taken the PSAT during the school day. Results of each student's standardized tests from sending schools and final grades from previous high school courses are available to BHS faculty through Infinite Campus, the school's online gradebook. Teachers assess student progress toward achieving the school's performance-based graduation requirements and record results on students' mid-year and end-of-year report cards. As a result, when BHS adds an examination of survey data from current students and alumni to its current examination of student work, common assessments, individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations, and data from sending schools, the school will be even better able to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. Because teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning including student work, common assessments, standardized assessment, and individual student progress in achieving the school's learning expectations teachers are able to effectively revise curriculum and improve instructional practice; when BHS adds an examination of survey data from current students and alumni, school-wide progress in achieving the school's learning expectations, and data from sending schools, the school will be even better able to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders

- school leadership
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 11

Conclusions

Grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. According to the Endicott survey, 86 percent of teachers and 81 percent of parents agree that the school regularly reviews its grading practices to ensure alignment with the school's core values. During the past three school years, the faculty, leadership team, and the community and academic standards committee met numerous times to develop an understanding of expectations in the Common Core State Standards and to revise the school-wide PGR rubrics accordingly. Some teachers have had the opportunity to score common assessments in teams to promote consistency in reporting and grading practices. Teachers who have students in honors option in English and Biology have met during release time and open periods to assess portfolios and assignments. The technology coach has provided opportunities for teachers to learn about and use the program Turn It In, which checks student work for academic honesty. Teachers enter grades within ten days of assessments. This policy promotes the expectation that students are responsible and informed learners who know their own progress so they are able to achieve their personal and academic potential. As a result of the process of regular review and revision, BHS is able to ensure that its grading and reporting practices align with the school's core values and beliefs about learning.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Commendations

Commendation

The continuous employment by the professional staff of a formal process to assess individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations based on specific and measurable criteria for success

Commendation

The communication by the school's professional staff of individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to students and their families

Commendation

The collection, disaggregation, and analysis of data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement

Commendation

The communication of applicable 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to students prior to each unit of study

Commendation

The provision of specific and measurable criteria for success which define targeted high levels of achievement to students prior to summative assessments

Commendation

The regular collaboration of teachers in formal ways to revise, analyze, and create formative and summative assessments, including common assessments

Commendation

The provision of specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work

Commendation

The regular use of formative assessment by teachers to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning

Commendation

The examination, individually and collectively, by teachers and administrators of a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice including student work, common course and common grade-level assessments, and individual progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations, standardized assessments, and data from sending schools

Commendation

The regularly review and revision of grading and reporting practices to ensure alignment with the school's 21st century learning expectations

Standard 4 Recommendations

Recommendation

Develop and implement a plan to ensure consistency in teachers' assignment of ratings for school-wide rubrics to measure student achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations

Recommendation

Develop and implement a plan for the professional staff to continuously employ a formal process to assess whole-school progress in achievement of the school's 21st-century learning expectations based upon specific and measurable criteria for success, such as school-wide rubrics

Recommendation

Develop and implement a plan for the professional staff to communicate the school's progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to the school community

Recommendation

Develop and implement a plan for teachers and administrators, individually and collectively, to examine evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice including survey data from current students and alumni

Recommendation

Standard 5 Indicator 1

Conclusions

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. Student behavioral expectations and attendance policies are defined in The Student Guide and on the website under Branford Public Schools Common Policies and Regulations. The majority of disciplinary actions involve attendance issues and skipping class. Students report that there are very few significant disciplinary incidents involving fighting or inappropriate behavior. Advisers communicate and reinforce behavioral expectations clearly through advisory periods. Security officers are present throughout the school day and during after-school activities. A safe school climate committee investigates alleged incidences of bullying. Restorative practices provide a means for conflict resolution between students and create an atmosphere of personal safety. Students are well aware of the processes to investigate bullying and to resolve student conflict. BHS offers a wide variety of co-curricular activities that help to create a positive school climate. Each year, the entire school participates in the Parade of Nations, where flags of many nations are carried by students and displayed throughout the year in the Commons. The cultural diversity club, peer connectors, Interact, Gay-Straight Alliance, Young Women's Club, and more offer opportunities for students to make an impact on school culture. Various clubs hold events that encourage collaboration among staff and students, such as student/faculty dodge ball, Mr. BHS, and Dancing with the Staff. The positive and respectful culture at Branford High School is evident daily in student interactions with one another and staff members. The staff fosters responsibility for learning through the use of Infinite Campus (IC), an open gradebook system, which allows students and their families access to grades and attendance. Students report that they have the opportunity to speak with staff members about class grades and PGR ratings when they feel as though there may be errors.

The high school promotes high expectations for all students in a number of ways. Students are encouraged to take courses that are challenging. Honors classes and the ability to elect an "honors options" are available in many subject areas, such as English 10 and Biology. Advanced Placement classes are offered to students in grades 10-12. BHS requires all seniors to complete a capstone project as a graduation requirement. This is a yearlong project on a topic of a student's choosing. Students display their ability to plan for deliberate learning, to demonstrate autonomous and collaborative learning, to employ higher order thinking skills, and to make connections to a global society. The capstone project is rigorous and incorporates high expectations. Staff members support students to achieve the high expectations set forth by capstone through their advisory program. The Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference has consistently recognized the school's athletic department as a quality athletic program earning achievement for sportsmanship and scholarship. Fine and practical arts programs perform at the highest levels. As a result, 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.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- teachers

- students
- parents
- school board
- community members
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The school is equitable and inclusive, ensuring access to challenging academic experiences for all students, making certain that courses throughout the curriculum are populated with students reflecting the diversity of the student body, fostering heterogeneity, and supporting the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. The majority of ninth and tenth grade core academic courses are heterogeneously grouped. BHS provides students the opportunity to explore introductory courses in more depth with an honors option which is noted on transcripts. Courses in the fine and practical arts department are open to students of all abilities and backgrounds. Students with identified disabilities enroll in co-taught classes. BHS co-taught classes provide both a regular education teacher and a special education teacher. Paraprofessional support is also used for students in need. Students with significant disabilities participate in heterogeneous groups in advisory, Unified Sports, Boundless Theater, and in other academic classes. The Horizons alternative education program is an example of an equitable and inclusive program that ensures access to challenging academic experiences for all students. As a result, Branford High School's commitment to providing an equitable and inclusive environment fosters heterogeneity and provides an opportunity for students to explore different content while uncovering their individual and collective strengths and learning to work together with the diverse needs of other students.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- department leaders
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 3

Conclusions

There is a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. All students at Branford High School participate in an advisory program which has been a part of the school community for over fifteen years. The advisory program is intended to foster student achievement of the 21st century learning expectations through social and academic development, community service requirements, and the academic curriculum. Most faculty members, including the principal, are assigned to an advisory consisting of twelve to fourteen students. Advisers spend approximately 28 minutes per week advising students on school civic and social issues. Most advisers follow their group from the beginning of freshman year through senior year. Grouped heterogeneously, advisory offers students the opportunity to interact with peers who may not be in their academic classes or co-curricular activities. Each grade level participates in activities intended to be grade relevant and appropriate. For example, freshmen review The Guide and learn about basic civic and behavioral expectations of the BHS community. Sophomores prepare for PSATs by spending advisory time reviewing guidelines for test taking. Juniors practice writing their college essays, attend an assembly about texting and driving, and participate in a class meeting regarding preparing for the prom. During their advisory, seniors work with their adviser to complete the capstone project. In addition to implementation of the written advisory curriculum, BHS communicates school-wide expectations and information about upcoming events to students through advisory. Some students indicate that advisory activities can be repetitive and not applicable to their needs. Some students and staff also note that advisory activities lack consistent implementation. Thus, because BHS has a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student, each student has personalized support to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 4

Conclusions

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; and apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Teachers have an active voice in determining professional development opportunities through the principal's advisory committee which meets with school leaders bi-weekly. Recently, school leadership has purposefully modified the daily schedule for most teachers to provide a common planning period for teachers within the same department. This common time provides opportunities for collaboration among colleagues focused on professional discourse for reflection, inquiry and analysis of teaching and learning. Instructional coaches and the district curriculum coordinator regularly meet with an outside district consultant to incorporate current best practices into both the written curriculum and into the teachers' instructional practices. The school district has six professional development half-days. School leadership encourages teachers to self-identify areas of focus and submit proposals to research curriculum, assessment, and instructional strategies. Teachers are also provided an entire school day in November to participate in self-selected professional development, known as "Ownership Day." On this day teachers either work together in the building or travel outside of the district to investigate an area of interest. To further ensure application of skills, practices, and ideas examined in professional development, school leadership formed learning cohorts for teachers in the same department. These cohorts engage teachers in the examination of student work, current best practices, and instructional strategies. In the areas of mathematics, English, and science, instructional coaches facilitate these cohort meetings to provide focus and direction. The instructional coaches offer support to all teachers throughout the school day. Teachers participate in learning walks, a program which provides opportunities to observe classes and to reflect upon curriculum and instruction. These learning walks have a specific focus, such as closure to activities. As a result of the time allotted to participate in professional learning experiences, the principal and professional staff have opportunities for professional discourse for reflection, inquiry and analysis of teaching and learning, which promotes student learning.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 5

Conclusions

School leaders use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning. At the beginning of the school year, teachers review the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Branford Public Schools Instructional Framework. Teachers reflect on the domains of "Environment, Instruction for Active Learning, Professional Responsibilities, and Teacher Leadership." They also consider the needs of incoming students, modifications in curriculum, and their professional growth needs. The leadership team meets with teachers at the beginning of the school year to develop goals and student learner outcomes (SLOs). During the course of the school year, administrators observe teachers a minimum of once per semester. Observations are both formal and informal. Administrators and teachers meet midway through the school year to evaluate progress toward goals and SLOs and to determine any needed adjustments. Administrators observe teachers again during the second semester at least one more time. Toward the end of the school year, teachers self-reflect again using the CCSS and BPS Instructional Framework. Administrators meet with teachers, determine if goals and SLOs have been met, and write a formal evaluation. From 2012 to 2015, administrators attended numerous professional development activities on supervision and evaluation such as the Shipman and Goodwin seminar on "Teacher Evaluation and Supervision and ReVision Learning Partnership - Teacher Evaluation." As a result of the regular use of research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning, all teachers have the support they need to improve instruction.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 6

Conclusions

The organization of time supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students. The daily schedule at Branford High School consists of eight, 45-minute periods that do not rotate. Students enroll in a maximum of eight classes and a minimum of six classes. Sophomore, junior, and senior students have open periods during which they can use the school commons, see teachers for extra help, or use the library/media center. If students do not perform well academically, they may be assigned to a study hall. Reassignments occur at administrative discretion, or by guidance or parental request. Student may not have more than two open periods per day. BHS assigns freshmen study halls during open periods. In addition, mathematics teachers staff a student success center also known as academic assistance during the day for students needing extra help in mathematics. Once per week students attend an approximately 28-minute long advisory period which provides academic support, notice about school activities, information about the PSAT and SAT tests, and capstone support. Teachers attend half-day professional development programs once per month. Teachers in departments with instructional coaches participate in weekly cohort meetings. Opportunities for full-day professional development are also available throughout the school year. Teachers may also attend professional development outside of the school. The principal recently organized a committee to review the effectiveness of the current daily schedule. The committee will assess scheduling issues such as equity in opportunities for teacher collaboration. The committee will also evaluate the nature of students' open periods and determine if they align with the mission statement and desire for academic rigor. Thus the organization of time supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- students
- parents
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 7

Conclusions

Student load and class size enable teachers to meet the vast majority of the learning needs of individual students. BHS makes an effort to to maintain class sizes that are manageable, equitable, and lead to improved student learning. Each department has unique and different needs for optimal class sizes. The majority of both elective and required courses average between fifteen to twenty students. Students and teachers experience class sizes that facilitate learning. Class sizes are well within contractual guidelines as well. Physical education classes average 25 students per class. The majority of both elective and required courses average between 15-20 students. Physical education classes average 25 students per class. The school and district administration continue to support class sizes that promote opportunities for individualized learning. As a result, student load and class size enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school board
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 8

Conclusions

The principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The principal and two assistant principals meet bi-weekly with the principal's advisory committee consisting of seven department chairs, two instructional coaches, two department liaisons, and a dean of students. The community and academic standards committee (CASC) has an open door policy and provides access to the entire school community. The leadership team facilitates the advisory curriculum. The principal and leadership team work closely with instructional coaches to align school practice with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations. The leadership team formally gathers data and input from committees such as CASC. Parents communicate informally with the principal during parent coffees. The district-wide administrative team meets during the summer. The high school leadership team works to align high school goals with the district strategic goals. The leadership team works together to review data to inform the design of programs, policies, interventions, and supports that address the social, behavioral, and academic needs of the students. Instructional coaches and other staff have led professional development opportunities involving classroom instruction. The accessing structured school-wide interventions/strategies team (ASSIST), lead by the dean of students, provides support for staff who have students who are not making adequate academic progress or who are having behavioral problems. As a result of the provision of strong instructional leadership by the principal and other building leaders, Branford High School is able to implement the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- parents
- school board
- department leaders
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 9

Conclusions

Teachers, students, and parents are involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision making that promote responsibility and ownership. Branford High School has a community and school standards committee (CASC), which meets monthly to discuss curricular and school community issues. Committee meetings are open to all parents, students, teachers and community members. The CASC committee typically has an attendance of 30 to 50 individuals and discusses topics such as new course proposals, the use of Google Docs, and rules regarding independent study. Bi-weekly, the principal and assistant principals meet with the advisory committee which includes department leaders and instructional coaches to address issues pertinent to the school. The principal hosts seven parent coffees throughout the year to solicit parent feedback and provide information. Through these coffees, for example, teachers and administrators implemented the web-based parent-teacher conferencing system. Parent input in 2011 led to the opening of the online grading portal. Parents and students now have continuous online access to attendance data, schedules, and assessment progress. In addition, the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and booster clubs encourage parents to meet with teachers, administrators, coaches, and students to discuss improving curricular and co-curricular programs. Parents, teachers, students and alumni are involved in the interviewing process for hiring new teachers and coaches. Many have served on search committees and interview panels. This involvement helps to insure that many different viewpoints and needs are addressed. The Branford community Youth Mentoring Program allows caring adults from the community to be matched with students for school-based mentoring during the school year; some parents are involved in this program. Mentors and mentees meet at school during the school day. Every year, three high school students serve as board of education liaisons and attend meetings so students' voices and concerns are heard in the decision-making process at the district level. Branford High School has an active student council ensuring students' voices are heard by administrators. For example, the school recently revised student social events as a result of input from the student council. As a result, teachers, students, and parents are involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 10

Conclusions

Teachers at Branford High School exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. Branford High School promotes a culture of collaboration. It is expected that teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school. Teachers co-chair the community and academic standards committee (CASC), serve as club advisers, and plan and implement a vigorous independent study program. Many department leaders, coaches, and liaisons have risen through the ranks at BHS. BHS teachers exercise initiative and leadership in both formal and informal ways. For example, members of the fine arts department organize a district-wide art show which has increased student and community awareness and appreciation of the arts. The fine arts department also ensures that student work is on display throughout the building. Several faculty members contribute a great amount of time to the production of both the school musical and the fall play. Senior advisers work with seniors to ensure that capstone learning goals are meaningful, interesting and challenging. Staff members in Horizons and the student council organize a veterans appreciation day each year providing students with greater appreciation and understanding of the sacrifices of those who have served the country. School social workers help to organize peer connectors, a group of trained students who promote a positive school environment by providing assistance to students who may need support with relationships, adjustment to school, and connection to the greater school community. In the science department, teachers run a physics and engineering club where students apply scientific knowledge, mentor younger students, and inspire scientific learning. Best Buddies is a club that fosters one-to-one relationships for students with disabilities. The music program raises money for local organizations and exposes the entire community to the power of music through their performances such as the Prayer Cycle, Roll Over Beethoven, and European Tours of Music. Model Congress provides opportunities for students to interact with students in other states, schools, and from different backgrounds to put their knowledge of government, legislation, and debate skills into practice. The entire school community benefits from a great number of very diverse opportunities for students to engage in co-curricular clubs, activities, and field trips through the initiative and leadership of teachers at Branford High School. As a result, teachers' exercise initiative and leadership essential to improve the school and to increase students' engagement in learning.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 11

Conclusions

The school board, superintendent, and principal are consistently collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. The principal participates in bi-monthly school meetings with the superintendent. The superintendent and principal actively participate in regular board of education meetings to review and discuss developments, policies, and procedures that affect 21st century learning expectations. The board of education created a teaching and learning for the 21st century sub-committee. The sub-committee meets regularly to focus on 21st century learning expectations for the district including the high school. The assistant superintendent works closely with the curriculum coordinator and the instructional coaches to assess and reflect on the implementation of the curriculum and the 21st century learning expectations. As a result, the collaborative, reflective efforts of the school board, superintendent, and principal ensure the achievement of the 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- parents
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 12

Conclusions

The Branford School Board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school. For example, the board and superintendent have supported the principal's expansion of the instructional coaching model. The work of the coaches with teachers at the high school is integral to the development of curriculum, assessment, and instruction that implements the school's 21st century learning expectations. The principal has continued the two-person athletic director model with board and central office support. The principal has also developed and implemented site-based professional development. The board and superintendent supported the decision-making of the principal as he worked through issues related to travel plans for a school trip to France last year. As a result of the board's and superintendent's provision of sufficient decision-making authority to the principal to lead the school, BHS is able to implement its core values and beliefs about learning and to achieve its 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- parents
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Commendations

Commendation

The safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture, consciously and continuously built by the school community, that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all

Commendation

The provision of challenging academic experiences for all students that reflect the diversity of the student body, foster heterogeneity, and support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations

Commendation

The advisory program through which every student has an adult, in addition to the school's counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations

Commendation

The professional development opportunities embraced by the professional staff that promote professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning, use resources outside the school to maintain currency with best practices, dedicate formal time to implement professional development, and apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment and to improve student learning

Commendation

The student load and class size that enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students

Commendation

The provision by the principal, working with other leaders, of instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations

Commendation

The involvement of teachers, parents, and students in meaningful and defined roles in decision making that promote responsibility and ownership

Commendation

The teachers' exercise of initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase student engagement in learning

Commendation

The collaborative and reflective efforts of the school board, superintendent, and principal that are constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations

Commendation

The provision by the school board and superintendent to the principal of sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school

Standard 5 Recommendations

Recommendation

Develop and implement a plan to review and revise the advisory program

Recommendation

Develop and implement a plan to review and revise the daily schedule

Recommendation

Standard 6 Indicator 1

Conclusions

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. Branford High School has the Horizons Alternative Education program for at-risk students. This program features very small classes and the development of social skills needed for success in and out of school. Students receive instruction from certified teachers in math, science, English, and social studies. Horizons students participate in non-Horizons classes as well as co-curricular activities. Students participate in Horizons by self-identification in middle school or once they are in high school. Administrators and counselors also identify and encourage students to engage in the program. This program serves regular education as well as special education students. Students are able to be fully immersed in the program and meet all requirements for graduation. They also have the option to take electives in the regular school setting. Students in Horizons are integrated into the larger school during passing time, lunch, common locker use, and co-curricular programs. There is a part-time social worker dedicated to the Horizons program who provides emotional support to students. The Horizons program emphasizes strong teacher-to-student relationships that promote student-centered learning. This program offers alternative transportation, different start and end times to the school day, and small class sizes.

BHS has a response-to-intervention (RTI) program, called Accessing Structured School-Wide Interventions/Support Team (ASSIST) chaired by the school psychologist. BHS is revising and updating the program. Forms have been updated to facilitate greater ease of communication between teachers and support personnel. Teachers report increased training about how to refer students. Teachers note satisfaction with the changes to the referral forms, process, and increased clarification of the program. The school support personnel also use multiple points of data, including grades, attendance, and test scores, to identify students who are at-risk. They meet regularly as a department, with the ASSIST team and with administration, to review data and evaluate resources available to address areas of concern.

Branford High School recognizes that students who struggle during freshman year continue to experience difficulties throughout their high school years. To address this issue, high school and middle school support personnel collaborate to identify students who are at-risk prior to their transition to high school. BHS assigns these students to freshman seminar, a program that requires students to meet with their guidance counselor four extra times during the school year. Counselors make students aware of barriers to academic achievement and engage in problem-solving for any barriers. They also ensure that students are aware of resources available in the school that support student progress. Students receive assistance in learning study skills and test taking. They examine their learning styles, gain self-awareness, and engage in goal-setting. The school also provides a freshman academy for early-identified, at-risk freshmen. A core academic teacher works with students during their open period to provide academic remediation and even greater support.

BHS has acquired numerous online learning resources. The Delivery Model of online learning began as a summer school program as well as a career exploration model (Edgenuity). BHS offers homebound tutoring to support students who are not able to access the regular education program. Tutors and students meet at BHS after the school day, at the student's home, or at the public library. Students may also apply to attend other schools within the South Central District through the Open Choice Program. Such schools include programs in marine biology or the vocational technical school. Students may also apply to attend schools in New Haven. The guidance department provides information about these programs. BHS also partners with the Educational Center for the Arts in New Haven to offer half-day programs in the arts. In addition, students participate in internships with local businesses during the second semester of their senior year. This opportunity is offered through the BHS career center.

BHS guidance counselors meet with high school students and their parents regarding course selections each year in the spring. They also meet with 8th graders at the middle school. Students and parents learn about programs at the high school and ask questions about any specific areas of concern. Guidance counselors have a written, developmental program. They deliver lessons for all students about graduation eligibility, goal setting, as well as post-graduate planning. This intervention allows all students to know what must be done to effectively and successfully navigate through high school. Counselors are also available as needed to meet with students through student self-identification or through teacher, administrative, or parent referral. The guidance counselors, nurse, social worker, special educators, administrators, school psychologist, and speech pathologist work to provide crisis intervention and address complex situations. Guidance counselors meet weekly to review their departmental needs, services, and to coordinate services.

Thus, the provision of 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, ensures that all BHS students are able to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 6 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Branford High School provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services. Student support personnel use a variety of communication resources, including digital and direct communication, to provide information to families about student support services. All parents have continuous online access to information about grades and attendance through Infinite Campus (IC). Open Gradebook provides students and parents daily access to student progress. BHS uses the IC system to alert parents of student absences as well as to make them aware of various events offered at the building and district levels. The school's website offers a wealth of information through the program of studies, Student Guide, District Success Plan, principal's newsletter notices of upcoming events, as well as the school and community resources. The website provides information about courses and programs, including the Horizons alternative educational program. It includes information about post-secondary planning guides, the college application process, financial aid, scholarship search sites, and summer programs/institutes. The website also provides information about resources for mental health and social services, including the mentor/mentee program. Guidance counselors support students and their families through use of the online Naviance Family Connections service. BHS welcomes families and encourages them to come in person to BHS to visit the guidance suite, career/college resource center, and health offices in order to learn about school-based or community resources. BHS encourages parents to make an appointments with faculty, guidance counselors, student-support staff, school-based health center members, and administrators. BHS personnel contact parents throughout the school year to problem-solve and strategize. Such contact occurs when the school makes referrals to the intervention team. The school also contacts parents to identify programming options and resources available for their children. In addition to the annual Back-to-School Night, administrators and counselors also offer an information night for incoming freshmen, freshman and sophomore parent coffees, junior and senior post-secondary planning events, and financial aid seminars. BHS always contacts parents when students are referred for specialized intervention, accommodations, or instruction. As a result, the school often provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services in order to enhance and improve student learning and well-being.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- school support staff
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 6 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Support services staff use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student. The student information system and learning management tool, Infinite Campus, provides an open Gradebook and SAT/ACT organization for all students and parents. Some teachers, students, and parents prefer to use Edmodo for communication. Branford is a Google school and uses many segments of Google Apps for Education (GAFE).

Guidance counselors, students, and faculty use Naviance as a college and career readiness solution. This online program provides interactive tools for the planning of individual curriculum and the college application process. Online college catalog databases such as AmericanCollegeTesting.com and Collegedata.com are advisory aids. Guidance counselors use Microsoft Office and Google applications during student advisory sessions.

The nurse utilizes the health module in Infinite Campus to flag students' life threatening conditions and allergies for staff.

Library/media personnel use a self-designed web page to provide access to school-provided databases, the Destiny Library On-line Public Access Catalog and additional research resources available to the public. Additionally they support the school community in use of technology integration such as Turn-It-In.com, Google Apps for Education, Twitter and other social networking programs. Teachers are able to sign up for class time in the media labs online through Google. Library/media center personnel assist with the integration of technology devices including iPads and Chromebooks.

The special education department uses specific functions of the Infinite Campus software, IEP Direct, Edmodo, email, and the Branford High School wiki to communicate and coordinate with students, staff, and parents. Special education teachers use adaptive technologies and software including Dragon text-to-speech, Clicker 6, Boardmaker, Lexia Core Reading, Q interactive assessment, and adaptive computer accessories. Thus, the support services staff's use of technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student, enables BHS students to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- community members
- department leaders
- school leadership
- school support staff
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 6 Indicator 4

Conclusions

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; and use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

The guidance department consists of five counselors serving approximately 1,000 students. Each counselor is responsible for students in grades 9-12 within a specified alphabetical split. One full-time secretary provides clerical support. A full-time registrar/secretary is responsible for maintaining student records. There is a full-time career aide, a full-time career specialist, and one full-time and one part-time social workers.

The guidance counselors provide a written, developmental program. Counselors deliver the curriculum in a variety of methods, including small group meetings throughout students' four years, individual meetings, information nights, the use of technology such as Naviance, publication and print resources, the school's website, and emails. Counselors review and update the 9 -12 guidance curriculum annually. It follows the State of Connecticut Comprehensive Developmental Guidance Curriculum Standards and provides the framework for delivery of services.

School counselors meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling. Guidance counselors systematically plan individual meetings with each student in their caseload to review course scheduling every year. BHS invites parents to these meetings. Counselors meet with students in small groups many times through the year during advisory. They meet with the students on their caseload to deliver developmental guidance lessons.

The career specialist and aide meet with students individually and in groups for lessons, as well as coordinate standardized testing, organize the college fair, and individual college admissions visits. The career specialist, administrators, and school support personnel are working together to create an alumni network resource for current students and teachers. They currently offer an alumni breakfast in an effort to support this initiative.

Teachers report that guidance counselors are available to students on an as-needed basis as well as available to teachers when a concern regarding a student is presented. Teachers report strong communication between school counselors and teachers where they are able to work collaboratively to handle situations and address student needs, including schedule changes, academic concerns, or emotional concerns. Students report that their guidance counselor is usually available and there is an open door policy to access their guidance counselor at any time. Students report feeling welcomed in the school counseling office and being able to obtain the information and assistance they need. Guidance counselors also report that they have an open door policy, making it difficult to follow a planned schedule for the day. However, the policy creates an atmosphere in which students know they can access their counselor as needed.

Branford High School delivers collaborative outreach and referral to community area mental health agencies and social service providers. Personnel make referrals to various services as needed, including the Yale-New Haven School Based Health Center run within the school, to the Branford Counseling Center, the state Department of Children and Families, Clifford Beers Clinic, Yale Child Study Center, and Yale Psychiatric Institute. Counselors also have a close network of other area school counselors whom they can access in times of crisis.

Counselors use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the students, to improve services

and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. The guidance counselors give surveys to students each year in each grade to evaluate the guidance curriculum and services. They use the student feedback, such as the freshman welcome survey and the grade 12 survey, to evaluate programmatic changes that are needed as well as to assess the efficacy of services provided. Counselors have begun to use parent email as a means of communication and plan to offer surveys of parents/guardians in an effort to gather more formal feedback data to evaluated services.

Thus, 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, and use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- school support staff
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 6 Indicator 5

Conclusions

Branford High 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; and use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

The school nurse, student-based health center, and the medical director of the school system fulfill the high school's health needs. Branford High School has one full-time registered nurse who serves approximately 1,000 students. There is one health aide, certified in first aid and CPR, who works one day per week. A medical doctor is the district medical director. The nurse provides direct, preventative, and ongoing care to students. Direct care includes emergency response, injury assessments, pain management, and evaluation of illnesses. Preventative care includes 9th grade vision and scoliosis screenings and 10th grade vision screenings. The nurse provides regular services to determine the physical health of students and school personnel. The nurse counsels students, parents, and teachers regarding health examination results. The nurse also provides emergency treatment for injury or sudden illness. Ongoing care includes staff education about medical conditions and treatments. The nurse uses the health module in Infinite Campus to inform staff about students' life-threatening conditions and allergies. The nurse also collects emergency cards that are updated yearly. Only emergency first aid is given at the school. The nurse makes decisions on a daily basis regarding referrals. The nurse administers all medications, both prescription and over the counter. The nurse attends special education meeting as necessary. The district medical director writes the standing orders and medication policies implemented by the nurse. The director determines whether a student is eligible for homebound services. The director and the nurse train the staff in bloodborne pathogens, germ prevention, and EpiPen use each year.

In addition to the school nurse, Branford High School has a fully staffed health clinic, the school-based health center, operated by Yale-New Haven Hospital on site. Families may elect to have their children participate in this program. The school-based health center staff consists of a full-time advanced practice registered nurse (APRN), a full-time licensed certified social worker (LCSW), and an administrative assistant. The center provides medical and mental health services. Families without medical insurance or on Medicaid are encouraged to use the health center.

The APRN and the LCSW in the school-based health center offer extensive health services to students including physicals, routine medical exams and tests, crisis intervention, individual, family, and group counseling, and collaboration and consultation with school staff. The school-based health center also provides assistance with stress management, depression issues, family issues, school problems, peer issues, sexual identity, and transitioning to college. The LCSW attends special education meetings as needed.

The school-based health center provides ongoing preventative and direct intervention services such as "Signs of Suicide," a training program for adolescents examining signs of suicide and depression, a peer mentor program that focuses upon improving overall school climate, nutritional education, and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. The center refers students for additional services such as outpatient mental health providers, mental health clinics, Yale New Haven Hospital, outside primary care providers, specialty services such as dermatology or orthopedics, Access Health CT, food banks, community dining services, and community clothes banks.

The school-based health center staff use assessment data to identify and address the needs of their students. It uses the school's Infinite Campus system to track student information and data, including grades and attendance. They also administer a monthly satisfaction survey to students which includes open-ended questions

for students to make comments or suggestions. The school-based health center staff use this data to improve programs and to promote healthy lifestyles.

Therefore, Branford High 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; and use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school board
- department leaders
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 6 Indicator 6

Conclusions

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 curriculum; provide a wide range of materials, technologies, and other informational services in support of the school's curriculum; ensure that the faculty 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.

At Branford High School the library/media staff consists of one library//media specialist who engages in collaborative teaching with classroom teachers from most subject areas to provide technology-based curriculum. The library/media specialist provides information literacy both to whole classes and to individual students. Classes take place, primarily, within the library/media center. One full-time secretary monitors library use and activities, provides access to library resources, completes circulation activities, and tracks library/media center use. Library/media personnel provide coverage from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. each day and the library/media center and learning center are open before and after school.

Library/media personnel are actively engaged in the implementation of school curriculum through a variety of means. They collaborate with teachers and implement learning strategies. They use essential learning skills needed in the 21st century in accordance with the guiding principles of the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) Standards for the 21st Century Learner and International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) National Educational Technology Standards (NETS). The library/media specialist actively solicits needs and recommendations from teachers and students for purchases to enhance the print collection and the electronic databases available to all students, faculty and staff.

The library/media center maintains an online card catalog, Destiny, and provides interlibrary loan access from the James Blackstone Memorial Library, the Willoughby Wallace Library, local public libraries, as well as public libraries throughout the state. The library has numerous resources including 10,057 books, 1,220 DVDs, and numerous audiobooks. According to the Endicott survey, 82 percent of staff and 78 percent of students agree that the library/media center provides a wide range of materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum. The library/media specialist also administers use of 25 desktop computers, 18 Chromebook, and 20 iPad devices.

The school community uses the library/media center for community meetings and programs, such as the swearing-in ceremony for individuals who have achieved U.S. citizenship. Newly designated learning areas are used for daytime and evening instruction by Branford's Adult Learning program.

As a result, 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 curriculum; provide a wide range of materials, technologies, and other informational services in support of the school's curriculum; ensure that the faculty 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.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- department leaders
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Endicott survey
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 6 Indicator 7

Conclusions

Support services for many 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 and to provide inclusive learning opportunities for most students. BHS has yet to meet the needs of some special education students and has yet to perform ongoing assessment systematically to improve services using feedback from the school community.

Branford High School has ten certified special education teachers, including the special education department head, who provide case management services for identified special education students as well as provide instructional interventions and direct instruction in both self-contained and co-taught classes to help students access the regular education curriculum as well as individualized education plan (IEP) goals and objectives. Special education teachers create and revise each student's IEPs to support each student on an individual basis. They make recommendations for academic placements based on assessment data. Inclusion is a basic tenet of teaching and learning at Branford High School. BHS places students in the least restrictive learning situation which sometimes include co-taught classes, as well as, academic and elective classes with paraprofessional support.

Two Area Cooperative Educational Services staff (ACES) contracted to work with the school district provide Branford High School students occupational therapy (OT) and physical therapy (PT) support. The occupational therapist and physical therapist provide direct services as well as consultation for special education students and students with 504 plans. An outside behavior specialist from the Institute for Professional Practice provides functional behavioral assessments and behavior intervention plans for students struggling with social/emotional or behavioral function issues. The Branford Transition Program (BTP) serves students with disabilities who are between the ages of 18 to 21. Students who attend have completed the traditional four years of high school, but need additional time to make a smooth transition to post-high school activities. BTP provides social skills training, vocational training, and independent living skills training through the use of direct and community-based instruction.

BHS encourages all students to participate in co-curricular activities including the Unified Sports and Best Buddies programs. In addition, all students participate in advisory. Students also have access to a wide range of technology such as ipads, Naviance, Edmodo, email, webpage, BHS wiki, Career Locker, Quizlet, Google Classroom, Google Docs, Google Calendar, department wikis, SMARTBoards, Dragon text-to-speech software, Clicker6 software, Boardmaker software, adaptive computer accessories, Lexia Core Reading, Q interactive assessment software, and ipads.

Current staffing has yet to meet the needs of increased numbers of students requiring special education services. BHS identified approximately 136 students needing special education support during the 2014-2015 school year. In the 2015-2016 school year, BHS experienced a significant increase in the number of identified students. The year began with 149 identified students and grew to 152 by mid-year. BHS added a tenth teacher to the special education department at the beginning of the school year, but .6 FTE was allocated to a general education class, Access Learning Lab. The added staff does not monitor a caseload of special education students. The addition of .4 FTE special education is not adequate to meet student needs. With the substantial increase in special education students, caseloads have also increased for related services support staff. The school psychologist, the full-time social worker, and the speech and language pathologist spend significantly more time chairing meetings, decreasing their availability to meet with students and teachers.

Branford High School has one full-time and one half-time school social worker assigned to the Horizons program. The social workers meet with students both individually and in small groups. The full-time social worker coordinates a portion of the planning and placement team (PPT) meetings and assists parents and families in locating support in the community. Branford High School has one part-time (0.8 FTE) licensed school psychologist who conducts psychological assessments and re-evaluations and provides individual and group support to students. The school psychologist collaborates with teachers, specialists, guidance counselors, and parents to support special education and general education students with academic and social/emotional/behavioral difficulties and assists in the completion of functional behavioral assessments and behavior intervention plans. The school psychologist coordinates and chairs a portion of the PPTs and also chairs the school's intervention team (ASSIST). Branford High School has one full-time speech/language pathologist (SLP) who is responsible for initial and re-evaluation of students requiring speech or language support. The SLP also meets with students on an individual basis or in small groups as determined by student IEPs. The SLP manages auditory equipment, completes follow-up hearing tests, and coordinates and chairs a portion of the PPTs. Branford High School has five full-time guidance counselors who address academic and emotional needs for all students, regardless of special education identification. Counselors also manage caseloads for students who have a section 504 accommodation plan. Branford High School has one full-time ELL teacher who teaches English as a second language through reading, writing, speaking and listening exercises in support of the high school English classes, with a strong emphasis on vocabulary in support of the content area classes. The ELL teacher is in collaboration with content teachers to ensure identified ELL students access the curriculum as appropriate. Eighteen students are serviced by this program.

The Endicott survey indicates 68.4 percent of Branford High School staff feel there is adequate collaboration among support services and the general education teachers. BHS effectively utilizes planning and placement teams (PPTs) which allow for collaboration among teachers, parents, counselors, and students and make use of informal meetings and professional development opportunities amongst teachers. Teachers also collaboratively share information using information gathered from Learning Strategies classes and the Access Learning Lab; both classes are designed to provide extra help and resources to students as well as to allow for communication between teachers.

Triennial evaluation assessments are used to determine a student's eligibility or continued eligibility for special education services. In addition to determining eligibility, these assessments are used to assist in the academic placement of identified students. Depending on the student's IEP, district-wide assessments are used to determine progress in academic areas. The special education department uses a departmental common assessment to determine baseline and progress related to students' transition planning. According to the Endicott survey, 63.2 percent of Branford High School staff report that they feel the school has adequate, certified support services personnel to support the needs of special education, 504, and ELL learners. Only 31 percent of Branford High School parents surveyed indicate that they feel the school provides adequate support to students; however, 60 percent of parents responded as "undecided" or "do not know" when completing the survey. Results of the Endicott survey indicate that 70.5 percent of Branford High School staff, but only 47.7 percent of Branford High School parents feel that the school has sufficient certified/licensed counseling personnel and support staff to support students in need.

Thus, support services for many 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, and perform ongoing assessment using relevant data, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. When BHS further meets the needs of special education students and performs ongoing assessment systematically to improve services using feedback from the school community, the school will be even better able to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school board
- department leaders
- school leadership
- school support staff
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 6 Commendations

Commendation

The school's provision of 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

Commendation

The provision of information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services

Commendation

The use of technology by support services to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student

Commendation

The school counseling services that 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; and use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations

Commendation

The health services that 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

Commendation

The library/media services that 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 curriculum; provide a wide range of materials, technologies, and other informational services in support of the school's curriculum; ensure that the faculty 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

Commendation

The support services for many identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners, that 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; and perform ongoing assessment using relevant data, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations

Commendation

Standard 6 Recommendations

Recommendation

Create and implement a plan to provide support services that meet the needs of all special education students

Recommendation

Create and implement a plan, including feedback from the community, to provide ongoing assessment of support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations

Standard 7 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The Branford community and the district's board of education provide dependable funding for a wide range of school programs and services, sufficient professional and support staff, ongoing professional development and curriculum revision, and sufficient instructional materials and supplies. While much support for technology has been provided, the school community points to the need for even more technology support and equipment. Branford High School offers a wide range of academic programs. BHS offers an extensive elective program covering thirteen content areas. The school offers a wide range of co-curricular programs, special education, guidance, and a Horizons alternative education program for at-risk students. BHS has numerous athletic programs. Branford High School employs approximately 112 full-time staff including teachers, administrators, and specialists. In addition, there are eighteen paraprofessionals. An adequate secretarial staff supports the certified staff. The district has increased funding toward professional development. Curriculum development is an ongoing process based on state and national standards in conjunction with the district's vision. The district funds curriculum development in the summer and during the school year. Instructional materials are readily available for all staff. Core and elective courses have the necessary supplies to deliver their curricula. Textbooks, both online and print versions, are readily available in all disciplines. The district budget continuously allocates money for technology upgrades and purchases. BHS continues to make strides to improve wireless network reliability and access. As a result, because the community provides dependable funding for a wide range of programs and services, sufficient professional and support staff, and sufficient instructional materials and supplies BHS is able to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Branford High School develops, plans, and funds programs to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant, to properly maintain, catalog and replace equipment, and to keep the school clean on a daily basis. According to the Endicott survey, a majority of students, staff, and parents agree that the school is well maintained and clean. The district head of buildings and grounds and the high school head of buildings supervise and coordinate these programs and are in constant contact and collaboration with the principal. Custodial staff members make minor repairs and bring in outside contractors to perform major repairs. The school's head of buildings and grounds completes work orders for repairs. Inspections of heating and cooling systems occur on a regular schedule. The maintenance department keeps a surplus of spare parts for the HVAC system. Numerous issues with the HVAC system surface weekly. Some major interventions occur each year. The board of education submits capital improvement items to the town budget. The district actively supports the needs of the high school. For example, the 2016-2017 budget provides funding for a new artificial turf football field. The Branford High School custodial staff has eleven employees who work three shifts: 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., and a swing shift from 10:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Thus, Branford High School develops, plans, and funds programs to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant, to properly maintain, catalog and replace equipment, and to keep the school clean on a daily basis which ensures that all students work in an environment conducive to achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 3

Conclusions

The Branford community funds and the school implements a long-range plan that addresses, programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements. The district and the high school implement the instructional coaching support model, identifying and replicating areas of success that have a positive impact on student learning. BHS dedicates professional development to promote continuous development and modification of the curriculum and effective instructional practice. The district and school, as part of a two-year plan, are dedicated to the development of curriculum units and performance tasks in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. The curriculum is aligned with Common Core State Standards. Branford High School's enrollment has decreased in recent years, but the school has maintained staffing levels and favorable teacher-to-student ratios. BHS has added technology and improved access and reliability of the school's wireless network. School leaders and teachers point to continued need to upgrade technology. The long-range plan specifically supports the technology needs of BHS. Most recently, BHS acquired 60 Chromebooks and two security/charging carts. Although the facility is well maintained, the school community notes some areas of concern. Strides have been made to help improve the HVAC system, but climate control deficiencies persist. The inconsistencies in room temperatures have a serious impact on instruction. The school has yet to renovate the gymnasium locker rooms built in 1983 at the time of a major school addition. Conditions in the boys' and girls' locker rooms are inadequate for the program's high level of use. In addition to physical education classes' use of the locker space, athletic teams are using the space for equipment storage. The school has developed a long-range plan that addresses programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements. Currently, the district has a long-range, five-year capital plan. Thus, the Branford community funding and the school's implementation of a long-range plan that addresses programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements ensure that all students have appropriate provisions to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 4

Conclusions

Faculty and building administrators at Branford High School are involved in the development and implementation of the budget. The budget process begins in the fall. First, department leaders ask faculty members what resources they need to support students and programs. Department leaders then submit budget requests to the principal. The principal reviews the budget proposals with department leaders ensuring that they support student learning and the school's core values and belief about learning and district goals. The high school budget is integrated into the district budget. Allocations become available annually on July 1st. The principal reviews purchases in MUNIS, an integrated municipal software system. Department leaders and liaisons submit purchase orders and approve purchases made by individual teachers. The principal reviews departmental and line item budgets each month. Therefore the budget process, development, and implementation, fully involve all faculty and building administrators. Technology department members consult with department leaders and school administrators on technology. Together they have focused on developments such as increasing WiFi access and providing additional Chromebook carts. They consult also on planning for new technology purchases as well as managing service issues. The technology department prepares the technology capital budget for the district. BHS proposals are included. The technology department also budgets for all of the annual subscriptions and maintenance contracts for technology equipment and services both for BHS and the district. As a result of faculty and building administrator involvement in the development and implementation of the budget, BHS is able to ensure that all students have the resources they need to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- teachers
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 5

Conclusions

The Branford High School site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services in most areas. According to the Endicott survey, 67 percent of the BHS staff and almost 80 percent of parents agree that the school site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services. The current site and facility are almost 20 years old and exhibit some wear due to age. One long-standing issue involves chronic uneven heating, cooling, and ventilation. Failures of the HVAC system sometimes have a negative impact on instruction and school environment. BHS is currently beginning to overhaul the system by replacing and upgrading the HVAC units in the gymnasium. Another issue involves unreliable access to the wireless network. Although BHS has made some improvements to the network recently, some areas of the school still experience limited access especially during times of high use. Teachers point to the need for an even more reliable network infrastructure to meet the demands made by ever-expanding use of technology. Both the boys' and girls' locker rooms in the gymnasium retain original lockers from renovations during the 1980s. Many lockers are in disrepair and cannot be repaired. Additional lavatory facilities are needed to address the high volume of student use as well. Teachers indicate that the loss of a copy center limits their ability to provide adequate hard copies for delivering instruction. The increased use of LCD projectors and SMARTBoards has helped to limit paper waste. World languages and social studies teachers have introduced online textbooks and online workbooks. The school is dedicated to increased use of computers in the classroom. Teachers point to a need for more Chromebooks for all departments. Most classrooms are equipped with LCD projectors. Some of them are showing their age and need replacement or upgrade. The G11 Mac lab, designed for use by Music Technology and Production class and the world languages department, lacks sufficient stations for all students to work by themselves. World languages teachers express a need for a language laboratory. The plant and site also have many strengths. The school community budgeted and installed a state-of-the-art artificial football field this fall. BHS redesigned the library/media center on the learning commons model. The spacious center features many flexible learning areas for large and small group activities. The spacious student commons accommodates lunches and provides space for meetings. Technology laboratories, art rooms, auto shop, up-to-date science laboratories, and culinary arts rooms support a rigorous and comprehensive curriculum. The gymnasium supports a vigorous physical education and athletic program. The spacious guidance and administrative suite promotes communication and contact with students and parents. The improvement of the college and career center and the creation of the multi-purpose room have greatly improved flexibility in advisory and instructional space for guidance. The health offices and facilities support the delivery of services to students and staff. The teacher work center promotes collegiality and professional discourse and reflection. While the school site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services, when BHS addresses concerns in the areas of technology, HVAC, and facility upgrades, the school will be even better able to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students

- parents
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 6

Conclusions

Branford 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. The director of building and grounds maintains records of inspections of all building operating systems. Proof of inspection is attached directly to many of the inspected items. The fire marshal performs annual inspections during the summer and supplies a list of action items to be completed before re-inspection. The head custodian conducts an inspection of all fire extinguishers on a monthly basis. He ensures that pins are appropriate and that extinguishers are pressurized. In addition, Fairfield County Sprinkler tests the fire alarms during quarterly sprinkler system tests. The district maintains records in a variety of locations including the central office, the buildings and grounds offices, and the BHS main office. Because Branford 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, students are assured of a safe facility for learning.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 7

Conclusions

All professional staff at Branford High School 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. According to the Endicott survey, 75.8 percent of the school's professional staff agree that, "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." BHS advertises events through daily school announcements in school and in district-wide emails, the school and district websites, the emailed principal's newsletter, school bulletin boards, and daily television displays around the school. Most academic departments use email and telephone as their primary methods of communication to parents. Many teachers make assignments and class activities available to parents through the school's website, Edmodo or Google Classroom. Departments engage parents during 8th grade orientation activities. BHS includes parents in search and hiring committees. Back-to-school night occurs at the beginning of each school year providing opportunities for parents and guardians to visit all their students' classrooms and to meet the teachers. Teachers are available for formal conferences with parents and guardians on two nights in the fall semester and two nights in the spring semester. BHS provides parents continuous access to student academic and attendance information through Infinite Campus. Attendance information is updated throughout the day providing parents the opportunity to see if their children are absent or late for a class. Guidance counselors set up orientation meetings with the parents and students of each year's incoming freshman class to discuss high school life and the freshman schedule. Response to these meetings is high among incoming families. BHS schedules orientation meetings focused on the college application process and graduation prior to the junior and senior years. Guidance counselors use a variety of methods to connect with the families who have been less connected to the school, such as direct emails, auto-dialer, the principal newsletter, the online newspaper, School Guide, post-secondary planning guides, Naviance, guidance advisory bulletins, grade-specific pamphlets, electronic message boards, *The Sound* and other local newspapers, local cable channels, individual meetings with counselors, small development guidance lessons, letters home, and Twitter. The special education department provides opportunities for parents to attend all PPTs (write out) by scheduling them at a mutually convenient time. The department provides quarterly reports on achievement of student goals and objectives and sends home individual progress reports to students and their families. The special education teachers works closely with the Best Buddies organization to provide Life Skills students with opportunities to engage in social activities with peers. In addition, BHS integrates students with disabilities with their peers by including them in the Unified Sports and Boundless programs. Administrators host events such as a parent-faculty-student group and principal coffee hours on a regular basis. Because 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, BHS is able to ensure that all students are supported as they strive to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school board
- department leaders

- central office personnel
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Endicott survey
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 8

Conclusions

Branford High School develops productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning. According to the Endicott survey, 81.4 percent of students agree that their parents have the opportunity to meet teachers, building administrators, and school counselors. Also according to the survey, 73.7 percent of the staff agree that the school has an effective partnership with parents, community organizations, businesses, and higher education. Parents partner with BHS through activities and organizations such as class coffees, back-to-school night, parent conferences, guidance seminars, the community and academic standards committee, and 8th grade orientation. The BHS booster clubs provide students with financial support. Annually, BHS holds an honors breakfast to which parents are invited. The project graduation committee consists of parents who organize, raise funds for, and supervise the annual post-graduation evening. Approximately 80 to 100 parents are active in the theater program. Many businesses sponsor the school musical. The Branford High School mentorship program consisted of 28 community mentors that met last year. BHS holds a veterans assembly to honor local veterans. Veterans hold breakout sessions to share their experiences with students at the conclusion of the ceremony. Over the years, BHS has worked to develop both formal and informal productive business, community, and higher education partnerships that support student learning. Fifty-six percent of the BHS student population is enrolled in the school-based health clinic (SBHC) via Yale-New Haven Hospital. There are approximately 130 students involved in Model Congress, a program that models real-life government experiences. Parents provide participants supporting social activities, such as dinners for the students and fundraisers for group trips. Students participate in programs such as internships, Early College program, community service, and career fairs. Approximately 45 businesses participate in the career fair annually. The Early College program (ECE) now support 20 students. BHS partners with technical schools such as Porter and Chester and last year had two students attend the program. BHS also has a partnership with Yale's Programs in International Educational Resources (PIER), a language program. Last year, BHS had a total of four students enrolled, two students studying Arabic, one student studying Portuguese, and one student studying Russian. BHS partners with the Educational Center for the Arts (ECA), an American public arts magnet high school. For the 2015-2016 school year, there are six students enrolled in ECA. The senior internship program is a component of the BHS career center's community outreach program providing students an opportunity to contribute to the community. Senior internships occur in May and June of the senior year and include a minimum of 140 hours on-site commitment. The Life Skills class is very active in outreach in the community. The special education department offers field trips to local two- and four-year colleges. BHS partners with Special Olympics and also offers special education students off-site vocational experience. For example, some students work at local restaurants or stores such as Walgreens. BHS makes connections with a variety of local businesses and community services such as the town office, other schools in the district, Achieve Athletics, East Shore Animal Hospital and CrossFit. As a result of the productive parent, community, business and higher education partnerships, Branford High School is able to ensure that all students are able to achieve its 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school board

- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Commendations

Commendation

The provision by the community and district's board of education of dependable funding for a wide range of school programs and services, sufficient professional and support staff, ongoing professional development and curriculum revision, and sufficient instructional materials and supplies

Commendation

The school's development, planning, and funding of programs to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant, to properly maintain, catalog and replace equipment, and to keep the school clean on a daily basis

Commendation

The funding and implement by the school community of a long-range plans that addresses programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements

Commendation

The active involvement of faculty and administrators in the development and implementation of the budget

Commendation

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

Commendation

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

Commendation

The professional staff's active engagement of parents and families as partners in each student's education and the outreach specifically to those families who have been less connected with the school

Commendation

The school's development of productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that

support student learning

Commendation

Standard 7 Recommendations

Recommendation

Develop and implement a plan to provide additional technology support

Recommendation

Design and implement a plan to meet the facility needs in the gymnasium locker rooms

Recommendation

Develop and implement a plan to ensure that the school's wireless network meets the needs of all teachers and students

Recommendation

Develop and implement a plan to ensure the HVAC system supports the delivery of high quality programs and services throughout the facility

Recommendation

Recommendation

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

This comprehensive evaluation report reflects the findings of the school's self-study and those of the visiting committee. It provides a blueprint for the faculty, administration, and other officials to use to improve the quality of programs and services for the students in this school. The faculty, school board, and superintendent should be apprised by the building administration yearly of progress made addressing visiting committee recommendations.

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

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

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

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

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

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

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

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

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

Roster of Team Members

Chair(s)

Chair: Joseph Damplo - New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.

Assistant Chair: Jeffrey Schumann - Enfield Public Schools

Visiting Team Members

Jamie Allesandrine - Haddam-Killingworth High School

Gina Arena - Weston High School

Meg Cloutier - Quabbin Regional High School

John Fontaine - Cranston High School West

James Francese - Wallingford Public Schools

Jay Greenberg - New Fairfield High School

Jonathan Horton - Torrington High School

Ron Janowicz - Malden High School

Amy Macintosh - Fairfield Warde High School

Richard Priolo - Academy of Information Technology and Engineering

Richard Rule - Griswold High School

Debra Smyth - Johnston Senior High School

Denise Wiedi - Danbury High School

Daniel Wostbrock - Mark T. Sheehan High School