

**THE VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**  
*of*  
**NORTH HAVEN MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
**North Haven, CT**

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

The Commission on Public Elementary & Middle Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges considers this Visiting Committee Report of North Haven Middle School to be an important document submitted to the school principal, the superintendent of schools, and to the Commission on Public Elementary and Middle Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. Distribution of this report within the school community is the responsibility of the school administration, and it must be made available to the public within sixty days of the receipt of the final document. When released, it should be done so in its entirety.

The prime concern of the Visiting Committee has been to assess the quality of educational programs at North Haven Middle School on the basis of the school's own self-study and in terms of the school's stated Mission and Expectations and the Association's Standards for Accreditation for public middle level schools. Neither the total report nor any of its subsections are to be considered an evaluation of any individual faculty member but rather a professional appraisal of the school as it appeared to the visiting team.

## INTRODUCTION

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges is the oldest of the six regional accrediting agencies in the United States. Since its inception in 1885, the Association has sought to advance the cause of education in the colleges and schools of New England and has awarded accreditation to those educational institutions in the six-state New England region who seek voluntary affiliation, comply with stated Standards of Membership, receive a recommendation for accreditation by the Commission, and make a commitment to the three-phase process of self-study, on-site visitation and follow-up. The governing body of the Association is its Board of Trustees, which supervises the work of six Commissions:

Commission on Public Elementary and Middle Schools  
Commission on Independent Schools  
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education  
Commission on Public Secondary Schools  
Commission on Technical and Career Institutions  
Commission on American and International Schools Abroad

The Commission on Public Elementary & Middle Schools functions within the framework of the Association and has seven Standards for Accreditation for middle level public schools. These Standards reflect seven basic areas, each of which should be viewed by the school and its community as a vital element of education excellence. They are: Mission and Expectations, Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, Leadership and Organization, School Resources for Learning and Community Resources for Learning. Within the commission on Public Elementary & Middle Schools is the Committee on Middle Level Schools, which oversees the accreditation process for middle level schools belonging to the Commission.

The self-study of North Haven Middle School extended over a period of two years and was organized and directed by a steering committee of 9 members. The chairpersons of the steering committee were Michelle Fogarty and Betsy Titus.

During the self-study phase, it was the responsibility of the steering committee to appoint sub-committees of faculty and parents to assess the school in relation to each of the Standards for Accreditation and to the school's Mission Statement. To this end sub-committees utilized the self-study instrument *An Investment in Planning the Future*, a document which guided them through the process of discussion, consensus building, and the final appraisal of how each Standard was met, not met, or exceeded. The outcome of each of the sub-committee's work was a report highlighting the strengths and needs in each of the seven Standard areas including many specific to each of the learning areas.

Upon completion of each Standard report, it was presented to the full faculty for a majority vote. The completed self-study document was then mailed to each member of the visiting committee and became the team's basis for the on-site visitation.

After the lengthy period of introspection by the school, a visiting committee of 13 members was assigned to the school by the staff of the Commission on Public Elementary & Middle Schools. Team members were recommended to the Commission and chosen on the basis of their demonstrated abilities in their own school settings in New England. Members of this visiting committee came from the states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, and New Hampshire. (A list of team members may be found in the Appendix.) It is important that the reader of this report realize that the visiting committee's role was not to act as educational consultants for the school but rather as peer professionals with the following responsibilities:

- To validate and evaluate the school's perceptions of its strength and needs, based on the Standards for Accreditation
- To assess to what degree the school's programs are reflective of its Mission Statement
- To participate in "educational conversations" with peers in determining the unique characteristics of the school, where it needs and wants to go in the future, and the ways in which it believes it can get there
- To prepare written commendations and recommendations designed to strengthen/improve education.

In the weeks following the on-site visitation, this report was prepared by the chairperson of the visiting committee and submitted to the building principal for dissemination. It was also forwarded to the Commission on Public Elementary & Middle Schools of NEASC, a group of twenty-three New England educators and one public member, elected to study the report and subsequently to make a decision regarding the accreditation status of the school. It is important to remember that the visiting committee does not make a decision regarding accredited status. On the following pages you will find a report on each of the seven Standards for Accreditation written by the visiting committee and reflective of the evidence gathered to make quality judgments and observations about the school. Each of the Standards' reports is divided into three sections: observations and conclusions, commendations, and recommendations.

On behalf of the members of the visiting committee and as the chairperson, I wish to thank all members of the North Haven Middle School community for their incredible hospitality during our visit. Many months of hard work and attention to detail culminated in a four-day visit that demanded teacher time and attention while teachers still readily attended the needs of students. The visiting committee appreciated each member of the staff taking the time to clarify and answer the many questions presented to them with thoughtfulness and patience.

We commend everyone in the school community for their unwavering commitment to students and their strongly held and demonstrated belief that all students can learn. The

visiting committee acknowledges the input into the self-study and reflection of the work done daily within the educational community. Specifically, the committee would like to commend the work of the Co-chairs of the NEASC Steering Committee, Michelle Fogarty and Betsy Titus. The written report was unparalleled in its presentation and thoroughness. The visiting committee wishes everyone at North Haven Middle School well and hopes that the final report assists staff in continuing on their journey of growth, development, and continued school improvement for North Haven Middle School students.

## SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

North Haven is a suburban residential community with more than 23,000 residents. The town is a commercial, retail, manufacturer town which employed 20,760 in 2008. There are more than 1,000 highly diversified manufacturing and commercial firms in North Haven, forty of which are assessed at over \$1,000,000. There are five industrial parks containing 490 acres and the town is home to Anthem BC/Bs, Covidian (US Surgical), United Aluminum and Connecticut Container. Quinnipiac University and Gateway Community College also have campuses in town.

The North Haven Middle School is located in a residential neighborhood with single-family homes approximately 2 miles from the center of town. The building was built in 1960 as a Junior High School (grades 7-8) and later became one of two high school campuses. It now houses the three middle grades (6-8). The physical building is a neighbor to the North Haven High School (grades 9-12) on the same property. The schools share the campus with separate driveway entrances, one connecting access driveway, a ¼ mile running track and athletic fields and bleachers on the property. Renovations of the middle school took place in 1986. The one level building has a logical floor plan and allows for ample natural light and views of the outdoors. The 2010-2011 enrollment of 841 students is projected to decline slightly since the overall population state-wide is declining. The building has two separate cafeterias with ample seating, a large and a small gymnasium, and an auditorium that seats 475. Each core teacher and teachers of special education have their own classroom. World Language, Reading and Unified Arts teachers also have their own classrooms. The library and the two computer labs provide supplemental information, materials and equipment for instructional use and all three resource areas are reserved by teachers and used daily.

North Haven Middle School is secured with an alarm system and staff members use their key cards to enter the building during school hours. Custodians secure the building and set the alarm each night at 11 p.m. Only the custodians, principal and assistant principals are given security codes to disarm the system. Teachers are issued classroom keys as well. Students secure their items in the hallway lockers. The halls are lined with a sufficient number of lockers for the number of students. However, they are too small to hold all necessary items. Students are supervised and wait in the backyard (or in the cafeterias during inclement weather) until 7:48am, when they proceed to their homerooms. Parents are instructed to drop off student at approximately 7:30am when the busses start to arrive. All visitors must enter through the main entrance where they are acknowledged by an office staff member who unlocks the door. Visitors then report to the Main Office where they must sign-in and obtain a visitor's pass. This pass is returned and the visitors sign-out before they exit the building. External security is also provided by the School Resource Officer (SRO) housed at the neighboring high school during school hours, in the event of an emergency or a security breach.

North Haven Middle School is on the north side of town with close access to the Route 40 connector and Interstate 91. It borders with Northford, Branford, Wallingford, Hamden and the City of New Haven. Within recent years, franchises, retail stores and restaurants (e.g. Target, Best Buy, PC Richards, the Olive Garden and Panera Bread) have been established on the southeast side of town, while major manufacturers/wholesalers have recently vacated properties on the north side of town.

The school is also within close proximity to the North Haven Fire Department and Police Station (all within a one mile radius). Other community services nearby include, the Town Library, the Town Hall, The Community Recreation Center, the Post Office and the town swimming pool.

The median family income in North Haven in 2009 for males was \$50,843 and for females was \$36,063. 86.5% was reported as owner-occupied housing, 13.5% renter-occupied and 2% vacant housing. The median age of North Haven residents was 41.9. The median cost of a home was \$178,700 in 2009.

In 2009 the town population was 23,035 and has remained within 2% of that number for approximately fifteen years. It is estimated that the district enrollment is approximately 91%. The median household income (\$81,510 in 2009) is 20% greater than the state average. People living below the poverty level in North Haven was 3.5% compared to the state level at 7.9%. 86.5% of homes are single family, owner-occupied in the Town of North Haven. The average assessed value for these homes was \$178,700 in 2009.

There have been no significant population shifts in the community for more than 15 years with an average population of 23,000. However, the closing of major manufacturing and wholesale businesses (e.g. Marlin Firearms, Stop & Shop Warehousing) have been a strain on employment for residents and for tax revenue. However, there have also been many retail chains and restaurants with the expansion of the Universal Drive shopping center.

Trends in the community closely parallel those of Connecticut and New England. The unemployment rates in the region for 2007 was 4.4%, 2008 was 5.0% and 2009 was 6.9%.

The student body represents the racial/ethnic composition of the community. North Haven has little diversity in its racial makeup and is a predominantly Italian and working class community. The school system reflects these community characteristics; the minority student population is approximately 14%. The town recognizes the need to enhance student and staff interactions with different racial groups and the North Haven Board of Education readily authorizes participation in any and all programs intended to foster racial diversity, regardless of whether funding is received for participating in such programs.

<b>Student Race/Ethnicity</b>		
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
American Indian	3	0.1
Asian American	248	6.5
Black	194	5.1
Hispanic	177	4.6
White	3,185	83.7
Total Minority	622	16.3

91 of the students charted above attended the North Haven District as part of the Open Choice Program. Open Choice brings students from urban areas to attend schools in suburban or rural towns and students from non-urban areas to attend city schools.



In 2009, 6.3% of this district's students (excluding prekindergarten students) came from homes where English is not the primary language. The number of non-English home languages was 77. Less than 2% are not fluent in English.

Chapter I is a federal program which provides funding (now known as Title I) for improving the academic achievement of the disadvantaged and providing a fair and equal educational opportunity for students throughout the nation. North Haven Middle School does not qualify for such funding but does have early intervention programs for at-risk students and students with math and reading weaknesses.

The levels of education of mothers/fathers/guardians of students in the school equaled 57% having post high school education and 14% of adults were without a high school diploma.

*Per pupil expenditures for the school and state average per pupil expenditures over most recent three year period.*

In 2006-2007, the expenditures per pupil (including staff, supplies, support service, plant operation and transportation) totaled \$10,278 in the district and \$12,151 in the State.

In 2007-2008, the expenditures per pupil (including staff, supplies, support service, plant operation and transportation) totaled \$10, 861 in the district and \$12,805 in the State.

In 2008-2009, the expenditures per pupil (including staff, supplies, support service, plant operation and transportation) totaled \$11,412 in the district and \$13,277 in the State.

*Percentage of local property tax allocated to schools and funds from other sources.*

Revenue	Local	State	Federal	Tuition/Other
2006-2007	71.9	26.9	1.1	.1
2007-2008	84.3	14.0	1.6	0
2008-2009	87.4	10.7	1.6	0

The average number of Open Choice students attending North Haven Public Schools has been consistent for the past 4 years. In 2009-2010, there were 81 students enrolled in North Haven Public Schools. Each student brings in a tuition payment of \$2,811 totaling an income of \$227,723 for that year. Monies for 2010-2011 will be determined in February, 2011.

The North Haven Police Department has a strong partnership with North Haven Public Schools. For nearly a decade, The NHPD has provided the schools with a School Resource Officer, housed in the high school. Generally, the officer working with our youth is has been very visible and approachable to students and has good skill in working with middle school-aged children.

The North Haven Public Schools has a well-established partnership with Quinnipiac University where all 6 schools provide practicum experience for the interns who are acquiring a degree in education. There are five to six interns assigned to each of the schools each school year. Additionally, Quinnipiac University sends its Field Study students into North Haven Public Schools to observe and eventually co-teach with our educators in their area of interest.

Recently, there have also been requests for student teachers/interns from Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) and the University of New Haven (UNH) to be placed with our staff and students.

Having partnerships with neighboring universities, demonstrates the attraction for future educators to work with our excellent staff and students during their formidable teacher training years.

There is also a partnership between the PTSA of North Haven and its schools. During the 2009-2010 school year nearly 50% of North Haven Middle School staff members were PTSA members. The NHMS PTSA meets monthly and the principal is in attendance to answer any questions and to give them a state of school report. Additionally, the PTSA reports to the PTA Council which represents all schools in the district. The Superintendent is present at this monthly meeting, fortifying the strong partnership.

The NHMS PTSA is supportive of all aspects of student life and their fundraising efforts help to support special presentations (e.g. in the areas of cultural awareness and character building). The PTSA also provides funding for transportation on field trips, thus defraying the cost to the students.

Our active PTSA supports students in a multitude of areas. Recently, they have provided funding for enrichment activities in cultural awareness and for field trip transportation to allow these experiences for students at a more affordable rate. The PTSA has also raised money to purchase equipment, as needed, such as kiln for the Art Department.

The North Haven Community Services and Recreation Department also has a close working relationship with the North Haven Schools. Within the past three years, Community Services have arranged and provided funding for student programs involving esteem promotion, anti-drug use and anti-bullying messages. Additionally, through grant funding, Community Services has initiated The Virtual DJ program to teach students about disc jockey technology and how it is used, a Boot Camp for physical fitness and Friday Night Fun Night. Staff at the Community Services and Recreation Department continue to offer alternative, extracurricular programs at a low or at no cost to the student/parent.

The Town of North Haven has a partnership with the local media including the New Haven Register, the North Haven Citizen and North Haven Television (NHTV). These constituents are very accommodating in reporting on our students' successes in community service events/efforts, athletics and in academic achievement.

In 2004, the North Haven Education Foundation was formed. This active group of local business owners and residents have annual fundraising events which, in turn, supports grant funding for multiple, extracurricular student activities each year. Such funding has allowed our students to benefit from a Bike Club (restoring donated bikes to give back to charity groups), CT River Salmon Project, Blue Team Scrapbook Club, Odyssey of the Mind and the International Book Sharing Club. In 2006, The Foundation also supplied partial funding for larger items, e.g. a 30-station PC Laboratory with teacher control a projector and SmartBoard and a Robotics Club.

In addition to this planned partnership, we are supported by local businesses when donations are needed for school events.

The partnership with CAMS (Collaborative Alternative Magnet School) in North Branford, was recently became insolvent when the alternate school closed its doors for the 2010-2011 school year. This was an enormous loss for the North Haven Middle School student who greatly benefited and achieved success through this alternative educational program. Many of the at-risk population were successful while attending CAMS. Without this option, the same population must struggle through the standards, environment and schedule of NHMS, which may not suit their individual needs. The district recognizes the need for alternative setting for middle school students. The school is in the process of researching additional options to propose to the Board to meet the needs of these students.

NHMS students can participate in youth lacrosse, soccer, cheerleading, baseball, softball and football through programs offered by the Town of North Haven. These are town activities, independent of the Board of Education and with no affiliation to the BOE budget.

NHMS has several courtyards and a greenhouse. For many years, these garden areas were voluntarily maintained by a private resident who ran a weekly afterschool program for students, the Courtyard Caretakers. Recently, the task has been carried out by three volunteer NHMS staff members, who have acquired the support and assistance of the town's beautification committee, The North Haven Garden Club.

There are many after school, enrichment activities for NHMS students and in some cases are voluntarily supervised by staff members and community members.

Based on the 2008-2009 data:

- 23,035 people residing in town
- 86.5% of homes were single family, owner
- 13.5% of homes were renter-occupied
- 2% of houses were vacant
- The median age of North Haven residents was 41.9
- The median cost of a home was \$178,700

Race/Ethnic breakdown:

White:	84%	(64% State average)
Hispanic:	4%	(14% State average)
Asian Pacific:	6%	( 4% State average)
Black :	6%	(17% State average)

Based on the 2007-2008 data, there were 3,863 students enrolled in the six public schools. There are four elementary schools (grades pre-K-5) one middle school (grades 6-8) and one high school (grades 9-12).

North Haven Middle School is comprised of grade levels 6, 7 and 8.

	<b>Grade 6</b>	<b>Grade 7</b>	<b>Grade 8</b>	<b>Total enrollment</b>
October 1, 2008	273	319	293	885
October 1, 2009	268	282	326	876
October 1, 2010	278	268	295	841

This data has not been kept during the 7 year tenure of the superintendent. The current interim superintendent also does not record this information.

<b>Average:</b>	<b>2008-2009</b>	<b>2007-2008</b>	<b>2006-2007</b>
Daily Student Attendance - present	97.2	96.4	97.5
Teachers-Days absent	10.0	9.8	11.7

The Performance Data show that in the past three years, 98% to 99% of students passed all of their courses and were promoted to the next grade.

The performance data shows that only 1% to 2% failed one or more core classes. These students must attend our 30 hour summer school program to pass these classes in order to be promoted onto the next grade. In the past three years 1 -2 students did not comply with this requirement and were retained.

<b><i>School Year</i></b>	<b><i>Total</i></b>
<b>2008 – 2009</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2007 – 2008</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2006 – 2007</b>	<b>1</b>

Academic achievement is recognized quarterly (per making period) through the calculation of the Honor roll and High Honor roll. The honor roll calculates all grades, including Unified Arts (music, art and physical education). The mean average of all grades must be equal to or greater than 90.0 to qualify for the honor roll and 95.0 or higher to achieve high honors. These students receive recognition in the local newspaper and their names are posted in the hallway, outside of the Guidance Office.

Additionally, the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) Scholar Leader award is given to one male and one female who have at least a B average and who exhibit leadership qualities around the school. The 8<sup>th</sup> grader who consistently volunteers his/her service to other students and staff members is recognized at the Promotion Ceremony as the recipient of the Principal's Service Award. Also, The Superintendent's Award is given to one male and one female 8<sup>th</sup> grade student who are honored at a state-wide luncheon in the spring semester each year.

The North Haven Community recognizes student-athlete accomplishments and honors their successes. However, the school itself does not have a formal awards ceremony.

Every month, the 9 teams and Unified Arts, select a Student of the Month. These individuals are selected for demonstrating academic improvement and/or qualities that exemplify the 4 P's (or being prompt, prepared, polite and productive).

Also, at year-end, team award ceremonies, the teams, unified arts and world language teachers, identify students who have most improved or shown commitment, achieved academically, demonstrated outstanding performance or exemplified the 4 P's, are honored and recognized in front of their peers.

Year	In-School Suspensions	Out-of-School Suspensions
2009-2010	69	77
2008-2009	75	68
2007-2008	N/A	100

The Student Information System (SIS) used is called PowerSchool, which has been evolving as a tool for the past 6 years. The administrators and team leaders report all infractions, regardless of how minor, conferences, parent contact data, Social Worker and School Psychologist interventions, etc., as a means of tracking our progressive discipline policy. Therefore, it is not possible to determine a total of non-suspension disciplinary referrals in isolation from all other entries.

Zero students were eligible for Chapter I/Title I support.

Number of students receiving special needs services in each of the most recent three years:

Year	Number of Students Receiving Special Needs Services
2008-2009	109 (12.0%)
2007-2008	102 (11.1%)
2006-2007	104 (11.3%)

Percentage of identifiable racial, ethnic and cultural groups that comprise the student body in the most recent three years:

Group	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007
White	84%	84%	84%
Black	4%	4%	4%
Hispanic	6%	5%	4%
Asian American	6%	6%	7%
American Indian	0%	1%	1%

Over the last three years until present there have been no significant changes in the identifiable racial, ethnic and cultural groups that comprise the student body.

Number of years the highest grade level students have been in the school:

Year	Student in 7 <sup>th</sup> or 8 <sup>th</sup> grade who attended in 6 <sup>th</sup> grade
2009-2010	97%
2008-2009	98%
2007-2008	97%

Over the last three years, 3 students left NHMS to be home-schooled but one has subsequently returned to NHMS.

Average class size:

2009-2010	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Core Classes	17.6	20.7	24.4
Unified Arts Classes	22.8	24.0	29.5
World Languages/Reading	13.4	18.6	13.0

Amount of daily/weekly instructional time by subject:

	Minutes per day	Minutes per week
Core Classes	45	225
Unified Arts Classes	75	150*
World Languages/Reading	45	225

\*Health/PE, Music, Art meet every 3<sup>rd</sup> day; Minutes/Week vary from 75 to 150 per content area

Percentage of students in athletic activities, including intramural programs, by gender and grade for the most recent three years:

Year	Female	%	Male	%
2007-2008	482	1.05	456	1.27
2008-2009	432	0.09	453	1.25
2009-2010	406	1.37	435	1.31

Percentage of students in other co-curricular activities by gender and grade for the most recent three years (identify co-curricular areas or programs):

Student involvement in extracurricular programs varies from year to year depending on what is offered and program schedules that may conflict. The following programs are currently offered and have been well attended by students in grades 6, 7 and 8. The programs generally run from 2:30 pm until 4-4:30 pm. The current list of activities is found below:

*ASAP-Assertive Students Against Prejudice*  
*Best Buddies*  
*Bike Club*  
*Book Club*  
*Courtyard Caretakers*  
*Drama Cooperative*  
*Drawing Workshop (CLP Program)*  
*Future Problem Solving (FPS) Grade 6-8*  
  
*History Day (CLP Program)*  
*H.O.P.E. (Help Our Plant Earth) in Spring*  
*Jazz Band*  
*Math League Grade 6 and Math Counts Grades 7-8*  
*Scenario Writing 4-5/Scenario Writing 6-8 (CLP Programs)*  
*S.M.Y.L.E.-Community Service Club*  
*Soldier's Angels – Knitting Club*  
*Special Chorus*  
*Student Council*  
*Student Store*  
*The Scoop - school newspaper*  
*The ZOOM Team - running club*  
*Trash Can Jam Band*

Enrollment/participation rate by gender has not been recorded for all activities, which makes this data unavailable.

Organizations which provide opportunities for student leadership and decision-making in the school:

- Student Council: promotes leaderships and community involvement through organizing activities, fund-raising and making charitable donations throughout the school year.
- Club S.M.Y.L.E: promotes citizenship and develops character as its members make great efforts to promote awareness to recycling needs within the school and students visit nursing homes and present needs and concerns to elected town officials.
- Student of the Month: promotes positive behaviors and improves self-esteem thus allowing students to become effective leaders amongst their peers.
- PTSA: Students can join the Parent-Teacher-Student Association and can be directly involved in reporting on school culture, student needs and concerns as well as student interests to the members of the PTSA.

## MISSION AND EXPECTATIONS

### OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

North Haven Middle School's goal is to strive to implement a mission which includes a *"challenging educational experience that develops independence, social-emotional growth, and understanding of a diverse society."* The school's mission statement is printed on posters throughout the entire building and is read daily during the morning announcements. Students take pride in knowing and reciting their school's goal. In its quest to live out the mission statement, the school centers its actions on the four P's, ***Be Prompt, Productive, Prepared, and Polite***. These are highlighted throughout the school to establish rapport and create a positive learning environment for each of the students. They are written to impact the social and developmental growth of the middle school student, and their consistent implementation provides the structure for both student behavior and academic success. The principal provides leadership and exhibits an active role in encouraging the students to demonstrate valued character and to practice positive social interactions to meet the school's expectations. The visiting committee observed, and their observations were reinforced in discussions with the staff, parents, and students, that the principal and faculty are committed to the mission and, through its implementation, are actively involved in making North Haven Middle School a place for students to learn and grow.

The mission statement and expectations were initiated by a committee representing the various constituencies within the school. Input was gathered from a variety of sources beyond the committee meetings and a developed draft was submitted to the faculty for opinions and suggestions. The input of the superintendent was also sought. A final draft was submitted to the faculty once again, and it was accepted wholeheartedly. Subsequently, the academic and social expectations were considered. During that time, members of the faculty completed a survey which addressed the effectiveness of both a mission statement and expectations. The results were mixed, which may indicate a need to implement a process of review and, perhaps, revision to ensure that the entire faculty is cognizant of and committed to the school's direction and expectations. In addition, as the mission statement is reviewed, more parental and student input should be solicited and used.

North Haven Middle School has made a conscious effort to re-evaluate itself, hoping to gain insight to assess and improve the school. Both the principal and educational community have made a commitment to implement the mission statement as well as the rules of the school by educating their students about academic and social expectations. Numerous fundraisers, pride days, and extracurricular activities have aided them in promoting student and faculty ownership in their quest to achieve the school's goal. Recently, the staff has worked to revise and rewrite portions of the curriculum to ensure consistent academic programming for all students. Attempts have been made to create classroom, hallway, and lunchroom expectations aimed at creating a safe academic and



social environment for all students and staff. Staff use the concept of the four P's to anchor their academic and social expectations, holding students accountable for their actions and academics.

The academic and social expectations are well-written, clearly stated and disseminated appropriately to parents and the community. The challenge for finding a balance between the two is a constant matter of evolution, but the staff and administration have developed sets of expectations that lay out the groundwork for continuous improvement. Academic expectations are integrated into the newly revised curricula and the social expectations are embedded in the *4P's*. The expectations offer the faculty the opportunity to measure its success in meeting the mission of the school. However, there is a need to devise and implement a program of self-assessment, using the mission and expectations, which will enable the faculty to review and judge itself honestly as well as its success in meeting the demands of their mission statement.

Academic expectations are integrated into the various curricula which form the academic map for each student and the school itself. At the time that the school evaluated itself, the district was in the process of reviewing and revising the curricula. This review is not complete, although the major academic areas have been addressed. There is also some concern that, until the new curricula are completely integrated into the day to day instruction in the classroom, there will be inconsistencies in the expectations teachers set for students. In addition, the academic expectations for all students cannot be implemented equitably without addressing the effects of homogeneous grouping.

There are opportunities for the staff to assume leadership in the school. The two assistant principals share the primary responsibilities of scheduling, discipline, and addressing parent and student concerns. Team leaders use common planning time to meet with their team to discuss student concerns or needs, meet with parents, or pass along information from the administrative team. Academic departments also exist to ensure consistency and articulation both horizontally and vertically as well as forming connections with the district.

North Haven Middle School levels its students differently within each grade level in its attempts to meet the academic needs of the students. In 6th grade, students are leveled for Language Arts and Mathematics, while Science and Social Studies classes are heterogeneously grouped. In 7th and 8th grade, only Social Studies is heterogeneously grouped. The grouping patterns in Mathematics and Language Arts include classes the pace of which have been slowed down or accelerated based on the learning needs of the students. Science classes include an accelerated class. World Language, Art, Music, and Physical Education classes are heterogeneous and grouped by team. Reading classes are in place for students or who score "basic" or below on the CMT or have a provision on their IEP's. Those students who participate in a reading class do so in lieu of a world language class. Most special education students are serviced within the regular education classes to ensure inclusion. A typical academic school day consists of five major content classes, a Unified Arts period and a SSR period. During the SSR period, students are given opportunities to seek extra help and/or make up missed work due to an absence.

The schedule, however, according to a faculty survey, lacks flexibility, but the staff directs its effort towards the effective delivery of the curriculum. Concerns about the need for more heterogeneous groupings among the major content areas were raised, but there is also a clear need for further training in differentiated instruction for all students.

North Haven Middle School has implemented numerous opportunities for communication within the building, district, and throughout the community. Communication between school and home is very efficient. Parents are informed of vital information through email, *AlertNow*, the school website, public access television and *PowerSchool/PowerGrade*. If a parent has a concern or question, email has emerged as the best way to get in touch with the teacher, because it accommodates scheduling on the part of the parent and the teacher. *AlertNow* sends calls to all parents to keep them updated with current information, whether it be about report cards, important notices, or even cancellations or delays. The school website provides paperless notices to parents as well as providing information access through the student handbook, daily bulletins, or even bi-monthly newsletters from the principal. *PowerGrade* is used by faculty to input data on a student's behavior and grades. Parents were very supportive of the school's efforts to communicate, and based on specific conversations with a few parents, it was learned that they are constantly logging in and accessing their child's confidential information on grades, behavior and attendance.

School Rules have been developed by the staff and administration and approved by the Board of Education. They are clearly written and published each year in the student's assignment notebooks. Both students and parents are required to sign off after reading them. Discussions on concerns or changes to the handbook take place at monthly faculty meetings on an as-needed basis. The handbook is reviewed yearly by the administrative team, and input from the staff and board members is, for the most part, encouraged and considered. Concerns were raised about inconsistencies within the school in the area of student discipline. Conversations with some faculty members identified mutual communication as an area to be worked on, while others noted a need for more follow through. There was also concern that the same disciplinary inconsistencies existed between and among teams and grade levels.

Students, faculty and parents believe that North Haven Middle School provides a safe environment. It was very clear to the visiting committee that, after talking to parents, students and staff as well as seeing the day to day activity, the school atmosphere is positive and respectful. There is a daily routine beginning when the students arrive during which the principal starts the morning with music recommended by the students followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and announcements. The school identifies itself as a center of learning and growth for students, faculty and staff, and expectations are set high. Students are aware of those expectations and go about their daily routine understanding that each one is accountable for his or her actions and outcomes. Discussions with students were impressive. They expressed respect and admiration for the adults in the building and exhibited a strong sense of pride in their school. They stated that they felt safe in the building and implied that they trusted the administration

and faculty to ensure that safety. Parents also indicated that the school was very cognizant of its responsibility to provide a safe learning environment for all students.

Effective interactions between and among students, administrators, faculty and staff promote a respectful and supportive atmosphere at North Haven Middle School. North Haven Middle School encourages growth and constructive risk taking among students. After school, students may take advantage of a variety of extracurricular activities to help develop their interests and talents. Teachers also help students after school or during the morning homework club when needed. Both teachers and students demonstrated their respect for and enjoyment of each other during the committee visit. The visiting committee observed the phenomenon in the hallways, the classrooms and the common areas, as well as small and large groups and one on one. Students are able to communicate with the principal formally about school based issues and activities through the Student Council. Students expressed a sense of pride when they informed the visiting committee about their participation in fundraisers and monthly pride days and they viewed those opportunities for bringing their school community together.

North Haven Middle School recognizes the contributions of students and adults to its community. Throughout the school, student work is proudly displayed. Student achievement is recognized in various ways. One event emphasized by both students and parents was the Student of the Month celebration. Three times a year, at an evening reception, teacher-nominated students are recognized for exceptional contributions to the school. Teachers and staff are also recognized at faculty meetings for various achievements as well as in interschool emails, newsletters, and daily announcements. Student Council and PTSA contribute in honoring the nurses, secretaries and crossing guards.

### **COMMENDATIONS:**

North Haven Middle School is commended for:

1. the positive school climate at North Haven Middle School
2. the positive and respectful attitude displayed by staff and students
3. the collective desire on the part of the staff to improve in all areas
4. the pride students have in their work
5. the strong positive connection between staff and students

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The visiting committee recommends that North Haven Middle School:

1. implement a plan to review and revise the North Haven Middle School Mission Statement and Expectations as a clear means of self-assessment and accountability

2. include parents and students in all reviews and revisions of the Mission Statement and Expectations
3. develop and implement a plan to ensure that the academic expectations are embedded in all curricula written for the middle school grades
4. complete the writing of updated curricula for all content areas, including music, world language, and physical education and embed academic and social expectations within them
5. develop and implement a plan to improve communication to ensure consistency in student discipline to reflect the Mission Statement and Expectations.

## CURRICULUM

### OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The current status of the curriculum at North Haven Middle School, at the time of the visit, varies from subject to subject. The district contracted with a curriculum consultant to work with select subject areas on the review and revision of the curriculum beginning in 2008. The newly revised curricula, based on state and national standards, have been developed using a uniform curriculum model called Understanding by Design. A Curriculum Committee is responsible for overseeing the development, evaluation, and review of the curricula, and a cycle for review has been established and is outlined in the Curriculum Guide Book, which was not available for examination. During meetings with the curriculum subcommittee members, concern was raised that indicated that the process of review, evaluation, and revision has veered away from the written schedule, and some teachers are currently adding and making changes independent of the curriculum process.

Although the major subject areas such as Mathematics, Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, Health, and Visual Arts, have worked with the curriculum consultant, there is currently no firm plan in place for the remaining subjects of music, physical education, and world language to undergo the same process.

The newly revised curricula are clearly written. Subject area teachers who collaborated with the consultant produced organized and comprehensive documents aligned with Connecticut State Standards and, in some subject areas, aligned with National Standards. However, the visiting committee learned from discussions with the staff that, although the presence of newly written curricula now provides a framework for teaching and learning, not all subject area teachers have begun to implement it with fidelity. Some teachers deviate from the now written subject area curriculum based on interests, personal resources, and individual judgments.

The subject areas without an updated curriculum document are dependent on the individual teacher's plan of action, and, at the time of the visit, there was no firm plan for these areas to collaborate with the school curriculum consultant to produce consistent coordinated documents. The world language and music department teachers implement curricula which they have personally written, or they follow the table of contents in a text. Discussions with teachers produced some concerns about the availability of written curricula for these areas. As a result, parity of academic experiences school-wide varies from student to student. This, in fact, affects the school's ability to adhere to its academic expectations.

A review of some of the new curricular documents, along with conversations with the staff, indicates that the newly written curricula are intellectually challenging and reflect respect for cultural diversity. Included are opportunities for students to implement the authentic application of skills learned. Students demonstrate the authentic application of

skills in various areas. In sixth grade science, students were engaged in an authentic project involving the hatching and release of salmon eggs. During the actual committee visit, eight grade students watched the Shuttle launch as part of their unit on rockets. Musical performances and the display of student artwork throughout the building were visual results of students' authentic application of skills.

As indicated in the stated expectations for academic achievement, the school offers a curriculum to enable most students to meet their academic, social, and personal potential. Students are expected to integrate research skills and technology into their academic pursuits. However, as evidenced by teacher interviews, classroom observations and a review of the newly written curriculum documents, there is currently no written technology curriculum. As a result, students must rely on teacher interest and skill level to benefit from technology integration. Furthermore, students move to the next grade level with inconsistent experiences. The computer labs are well utilized throughout the day, in spite of the absence of formal curriculum. Teachers, who are knowledgeable, provide students with instruction while those who are uncomfortable do not. This results in inconsistent opportunities for the integration of technology to support the development of these skills. The staff then supports each other by passing along knowledge of technology to their colleagues in order to provide technology opportunities for students.

The learning community clearly understands the positive impact of offering middle level students opportunities to extend their learning beyond the classroom. The school offers a unique and extensive variety of coursework, co- and extra- curricular activities and community projects which support both the curriculum and student needs. In addition to the extended day opportunities for all students, a program to enhance opportunities for the gifted and talented students is offered after school and called the Creative Learning Program. Students have the opportunity to select books at their reading level, choose projects of interest, participate in hands-on activities and take coursework at their prescribed level of ability. Moreover, struggling readers are provided with a period of reading intended to improve their comprehension and fluency in lieu of taking a world language. School counselors also provide a curriculum that is specific to developing socially competent individuals. Unified Arts courses also expand learning opportunities for students, but some staff finds the array of offerings very limited. Scheduling and budget impose certain limitations, but, in the interests of the grade and age levels, consideration should be given to the number and kinds of offerings in this area. At the same time, additional offerings in the field of technology would provide learners with opportunities for 21st Century learning in order to prepare them for the post secondary education and beyond. Finally, field trips, contests, assemblies, fundraisers, spirit days, and guest speakers are also provided to meet the needs of the North Haven middle school students.

Grouping practices at North Haven Middle School have continued to follow a homogeneous model. Heterogeneous grouping is considered to be a cornerstone of middle level education, but North Haven Middle School schedules students by general ability levels. Middle level schools have been espousing heterogeneous models for many years with some adjustments made for mathematics. At North Haven Middle, in the

seventh and eighth grades, students may move up or down in level, but they are segregated in language arts, science, and social studies. By grouping students according to ability and publicizing the outcome may create an atmosphere of elitism and may cause those in below average groupings to feel a sense of low self-worth. Improving the capacity of the faculty to differentiate instruction is a strategy that will support heterogeneous grouping.

The school implements the middle level philosophy of organizing students into core subject teams and scheduling them to attend Unified Arts classes during team planning times. While opportunities are limited for team teachers and the Unified Arts staff to meet for interdisciplinary unit planning and curriculum articulation, the schedule does permit core teachers to meet by grade and subject on Wednesdays and four days per week in their teams as noted in the self-study. While the opportunity for constructive discourse exists and is appreciated, there are no clear expectations for the outcome of these meetings. The staff stated that dialogue between and among grade levels and departments needed purpose and direction. Limited areas of interdisciplinary connections have been implemented in language arts and social studies surrounding the theme of war as a result of these meetings. Department heads on staff at the high school that can provide curricular leadership are scheduled to meet monthly with their middle school subject area colleagues. However, there is inconsistent use of this designated time and the lack of clearly structured expectations for articulating curriculum discussions limit opportunities to improve outcome within the content area. The staff recommended using professional development time as a means to address this concern. In conversations with central office personnel, the visiting team was told priority in the area of curriculum would be included in the district-wide strategic plan.

The library media specialist gathers resources, both print and electronic, for students to use when conducting research. In addition, she teaches numerous web-based research processes such as evaluating web sites and finding credible resources. She supports the written curriculum through the purchase of books and videos and creates book carts for teachers to use in the classroom when students are unable to use the library. She provides opportunities for teachers to enhance their teaching by developing note taking sheets for students to use which include an area for students to record works-cited information. In addition, she provides a group of multi-media resources for the science department that covers topics not contained in the classroom text. The library media specialist also offers an orientation program for all incoming 6th grade students. She gives book talks when requested by classroom teachers including selections for the summer reading program. However, the library media specialist does not have a formal role in the development, review, and revision of the curriculum nor is she directly involved as a resource in the discussion of curriculum in development. The district librarians meet monthly and have written their own sequential curriculum as it applies to their respective schools and library program.

The newly developed curriculum guides contain references and suggestions for the use of technology in those content areas. These tools include: LCD projectors, smart boards, classroom TVs, and web sites. However, the limited technology available restricts its use

and prohibits all students from being provided with a similar experience. There is a wide area network connected to the internet via a mix of point-to-point T1 lines and fiber. However, connectivity issues are a frequent occurrence, and the access to wireless is severely limited. In addition, staff and administration articulated repeated frustration regarding the shortage of computers within the school and the difficulties experienced in their desire to make use of them. The computers in the MAC lab are currently outdated, so some software that teachers would like to incorporate into their written curriculum is not a viable option as computer memory is not compatible. With their limited memory, boot-up time is cumbersome and the learning process of the students is directly impacted. Current subject area curriculum does not reflect technology integration to support 21st Century learning.

There were some areas of specific concern raised during the committee visit that were indicative of a concern that the curriculum development process has slowed and needs to be redirected. A concern was expressed regarding the availability of sufficient funding and staff in order to implement the process of curriculum review and revision. Teachers in the area of language arts have expressed concern with regard to not having ample time on task to implement both the reading and writing curricula. They also noted the need for professional development in area of teaching writing. The music department stated that curricular revisions are difficult due to the absence of a department head to facilitate the process. The social studies department expressed the need to replace outdated text books at the sixth grade level in order to meet curriculum demands.

Professional development to support the implementation of the new curriculum documents has been limited because of the school's need to prepare for the visiting committee's arrival as well as the preparation of the self-study. Prior to the self-study, however, professional development was organized at the district level with minimal input from the staff as to the building needs. The visiting committee suggests that the use of professional development time can well be spent addressing recommendations which are raised in this report. In addition to the curriculum needs, using professional development time and programs to address the issues such as technology integration, differentiated instruction and state-mandated Scientifically Research-Based Interventions and others, all of which will positively impact the implementation of the curriculum program.

**COMMENDATIONS:**

North Haven Middle School is commended for:

1. the commitment of the district to curricular renewal through the hiring of a consultant for Understanding by Design
2. the involvement of the staff in the design and writing of the newly revised curriculum
3. the thorough analysis, evaluation, and reflection on the present curricular strengths and areas for improvement in order to provide students with opportunities for meeting their unique potential.



4. the strong commitment on the part of the staff and administration to provide students with opportunities to extend their learning experiences beyond the school day.
5. the strong desire on the part of the staff and administration to provide opportunities to utilize available technology in the school.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The visiting team recommends that North Haven Middle School:

1. create and maintain a calendar for curriculum review, revision and implementation for all content areas.
2. complete the process of writing curriculum for all content areas
3. ensure the integration of technology into all content area documents
4. provide appropriate time and support to ensure the full implementation of the curriculum
5. develop and implement a supervisory protocol which ensures that academic adherence to the curriculum
6. review and consider the development of an elective course(s) related to the acquisition of basic technological skills.
7. develop and implement a plan to integrate technology instruction and application into all written curricula.
8. increase the use of digital content and web-based resources in order to support and enhance instructional opportunities.
9. provide meaningful professional development to support school-wide areas of need such as differentiated instruction that impact the implementation of heterogeneous curriculum
10. develop and implement a plan to ensure equitable implementation of the curriculum goals and objectives.
11. initiate a conversation about grouping practices in light of middle school best practices.
12. Provide meaningful professional development to support the establishment of writing across the curriculum

## INSTRUCTION

### OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The school's mission statement calls for providing a comprehensive, creative, and challenging educational experience that develops independence, social-emotional growth, and an understanding of a diverse society. The newly written curricula provide the opportunity for an assured and comprehensive education. Many activities with the potential for creative, independent learning were reported in the self-study and verified by observations in some classrooms and through discussions with students, teachers and parents. Many project-based learning activities, with choice about topic and product, were seen throughout the school. Some opportunities to learn about diverse cultures were evident in world language study, social studies projects, and others were available outside the instructional arena through membership in extracurricular activities such as Best Buddies.

Research-based instructional strategies seen in some classrooms included collaborative learning activities, inquiry-based learning, and direct instruction. The self-study cites the recent development of a written curriculum for math, language arts, and social studies. The science curriculum has now been completed as well. While curriculum binders are available, some staff members reported not being in possession of a written curriculum document in their content area. Curriculum writing has included the creation of common pre- and post-assessments for the stated purpose of maximizing instructional time and differentiating instruction. Compacting curriculum, based on pre-testing could create the opportunity for challenging learning experience by eliminating content that been mastered to make room for added depth and challenge. In visits to classrooms, little evidence of differentiation for individuals was observed. In discussions with teachers, little evidence was found to substantiate the use of these assessments to alter instruction, except when expectations were adjusted whole class, based on the class level. Many teachers identified pacing as the main instructional difference between the various leveled classes. Many teachers stated clearly that professional development in differentiated instruction is needed to effectively adjust instruction to meet the range of needs, even within leveled classes.

Although the collection of data from common assessments has begun, it does not yet appear to be having a significant impact on instruction. A need for a more effective data management system and professional development in analyzing data and matching instruction to identified student needs was acknowledged in the self-study and voiced by many staff members during the visit.

Curriculum expectations are aligned with state standards and developed with attention to the levels of Bloom's taxonomy. The self-study provides examples of a variety of instruction used by some teachers to achieve these high expectations. These included

modeling through examples, providing rubrics and study guides, simulations, hands-on experiments, independent research, and collaborative work. These were seen in some of the classrooms visited. To meet some of the needs of the wide range of students, teachers also use the assistance of special education teachers and paraprofessionals. Common assessments are tiered. While some teachers offered examples of tiered instruction for certain assignments in some classes, others believe that the leveling of classes already meets any need to ensure that all students are matched with appropriate instruction. Some evidence of differentiation exists in some assigned projects which allow students to make choices in topic, process, and product that match interests, developmental stages, and learning styles. Advanced classes are offered in math, language arts, and science in various grades. An extra reading class is mandated for students performing at or below the "Basic" level in the reading comprehension portion of the CMT in lieu of world language. The Creative Learning Program, Math Counts, Math League, and Future Problem-Solvers, which are designed to meet some of the unique needs and interests of the gifted and talented population, are optional, afterschool offerings, though transportation is an issue for some students.

No Scientifically Research-based Intervention (SRBI) process is in place to provide targeted instruction in conjunction with progress monitoring to close student learning gaps in reading, math, and writing as mandated by the state of Connecticut.

Throughout the school, professional staff utilizes many different instructional strategies. Science classes use exploratory practices in labs and embedded tasks. Research projects in some social studies classes along with the creation of symbolic self-portraits in art require self-direction and allow for personalization. Guest speakers with knowledge and expertise about health and history topics as well as applied problem solving in math classes, make the learning authentic and relevant. Teachers were observed asking students to reflect, form judgments and evaluate situations. They were asked to justify their thinking. In a science classroom a teacher asked, "What could we have done differently to improve this lab?" A language arts teacher asked, about a character's actions, "Is it ever okay to hit someone else?" The self-study cited examples of personalized exploration through role-playing in language arts, and simulations in social studies. Examples of integration across different curricula were found in the self-study where it mentioned the writing of new song lyrics to *Staying Alive* to show what students had learned about early humans. The parody was called *Freezing Alive*.

In discussions with teachers, the committee took note of a number of discrete concerns. For example, while co-planning across disciplines was not common, the skills from one subject area were often called upon to complete tasks in another subject area. Teachers cited the lack of common planning time as a barrier to more effective cross-disciplinary planning. One example is that writing and math skills come into play in the science class. As a strategy, math teachers reported the frequent use of real-life examples to augment the instruction. Language arts teachers reported that they utilized journal writing as a personalized, reflective, self-directed activity, but there were wide variances in the extent to which teachers employ these types of instructional strategies. Observation and feedback by administrators, as part of the evaluation process, could lead to more

widespread and consistent use of effective instructional strategies that result in increased learning for all students. In addition, teachers voiced a concern that reduced special education support has resulted in an even greater need for regular education teachers to accommodate the more divergent needs of students, another reason for the need for strong professional development in the area of differentiated instruction. Finally, the visiting committee reported a strong reliance on lecture and whole class instruction when classrooms were visited.

The self-study explains that, as new curricula were recently written, application of higher order thinking skills was built into the common assessments. Both the self-study and teacher interviews provide evidence that problem-solving and higher-order thinking are supported and encouraged through some teachers' choices of instructional strategies. The discovery approach is reported in math and science classes and was evident as 6th graders approached an embedded task in science that investigated the properties of soils, and as 7th graders debriefed about a "Penny Lab" that investigated how the copper content of pennies has changed over the last several decades. Some 8th grade students spoke with enthusiasm about debates they had on such topics as genetic engineering. Math teachers reported that students analyze, interpret, and explain their work in such projects as creating a classroom blueprint to scale. Art teachers ask students to analyze, interpret, evaluate, and make judgments about artists and their work, and to apply problem-solving skills to the selection of mediums and techniques. Social studies teachers call students to think and write about historical events from the perspectives of different groups of people, such as those on each side of the Revolutionary War. Through the many learning activities during their middle school experience, students have the opportunity to be exposed to assignments that align with both developmental stages and multiple learning styles. Because there are wide variances in the extent to which teachers employ these types of instructional strategies, however, an assured experience for all may not be guaranteed across all content areas and grade levels.

Teacher access to technology is limited. The self-study indicated that inconsistencies in the wireless network require that they be connected to the LAN (local area network) to utilize technology in classrooms. The visiting committee saw instances in which the technology just did not work well enough to benefit the lesson planning. One teacher demonstrated how, if he uses the LAN, he must run a long extension cord across the floor creating a safety issue. The self-study also reported "the majority of technology in the school that is available for student use is located outside of the classrooms, in the library and the computer labs." During interviews and conversations with the staff, teachers reported that, in the past, computers were available in the classrooms but had since been moved to the school's two computer labs, which teachers are required to schedule for use many months in advance. Spontaneous use of computers to enhance a lesson, therefore, is impossible. Teachers reported that they have to "compete" for use of the labs. There is one SmartBoard and an ENO board in the PC lab, although there is a clear need for training to use them efficiently. Numerous teachers reported that if they had computers in their classrooms, they would use them more frequently, and one teacher expressed that a SmartBoard in his classroom would greatly enhance his instruction. The Facilities Manager pointed out that even if computers and technology are available, upgrades

would be needed for power. The current middle school network could not currently handle any additional technology.

Despite these challenges, teachers incorporate technology into instruction as much as possible by bringing students to the computer lab to conduct online research or to prepare and format papers, borrowing the LCD projectors available for teacher use to display PowerPoint presentations and other visual aids in the classroom, and assigning projects that require students to apply graphic design concepts in media arts using Adobe Photoshop. Other software programs are available to students and staff. During interviews with teachers, they presented evidence of students using the abovementioned programs to complete assignments. Evidence included an Excel spreadsheet required in a "Spend a Million Dollars" lesson in social studies; lesson plans explaining how to conduct online research for inquiry projects; and the use of online programs such as Test Prep to prepare students for the CMT test. A language arts teacher shared samples of typed student work as testament to the use of Microsoft Office and AppleWorks for written papers. During one observation, a social studies teacher projected the live launch of the space shuttle *Endeavor* via an LCD projector to two classes of students congregated in his classroom. Another teacher taught a class about understanding Web site organization via an LCD projector in the PC lab adjacent to the library.

The visiting committee took particular note of the technology issue during its stay and agreed that the need to provide teachers with regular, reliable access to the technology was vital to their need to reach their instructional objectives. Remedies are many and varied, but particular attention should be paid to easier access to computers or computer labs for classrooms teachers. Classroom technology, including computers, mounted LCD projectors and SmartBoards are examples of technology identified by the staff as tools to enhance the learning process. This would also broaden the student access to technology. The visiting committee also noted that each new addition to the technology inventory brings the need for trainings and upgrading.

There are coordinators for grades six through eight in the subjects of science, social studies, math, world language, and language arts. The special education, physical education, and art departments have coordinators who cover grades Kindergarten through twelve. These coordinators are district-wide and are housed at the high school. During one-on-one teacher interviews and team meetings, however, it was clear that there were inconsistencies in meeting times, number of meetings and scheduling conflicts which impacted both the relationship with the coordinators and the middle school teachers and the coordinators' opportunities to manage change and growth among the staff, specifically within the music department.

Special educators, paraprofessionals, and tutors are present in the classroom to assist the students in the learning process. Paraprofessionals and tutors often sat beside students during the class. In one eighth-grade language arts class, a special educator co-taught a lesson in which he provided background information for a novel the class would read; in another seventh-grade social studies class, the special educator sat with two students assisting them with taking notes on a reading assignment; and in another seventh-grade

math class, the special educator worked with specific students, assisting and modifying work as needed. Although special educators and paraprofessionals were visible in the classrooms observed by the visiting committee members, it was clear that their number was not sufficient to cover all the support issues that would arise in a school of that size. Teams told the visiting committee how they share the special education persons, limiting the opportunity to attain assistance from them to modify an assignment or providing extra help. A reallocation of special education staff might provide classroom teachers greater assistance in helping struggling students.

Consistent with the self-study, professional development was referred to as a concern from the perspective of the teachers. North Haven Middle School had a professional development coordinator six years ago, but the position was not filled following a retirement. Recently the Staff Professional Development Committee has been resurrected at the request of the staff. This is timely, because the majority of professional development time during 2010-11 was dedicated to completing the self-study for the accreditation process. The district currently offers workshops designed and led by curriculum consultant hired to work with the Health, Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies departments to re-write their curricula. In addition, there are a few opportunities for the principal to provide information in advance of some upcoming workshops. Now that the NEASC experience is behind them, teachers expressed a desire for the district to offer more content-specific workshops and additional training in differentiated instruction and technology. While recently, a great emphasis was recently placed on bullying as a professional development topic, it was overdone and an opportunity to address instructional improvement was delayed. The self-study also indicated that there is no formal process of evaluating professional development workshops to ensure that both the district goals and the teacher needs are met.

While there is a limited budget for professional development, and because requests may be denied, some teachers have stopped submitting requests. In addition, teachers are often required to find their own coverage in order to attend an out of school conference or workshop which is supposed to be a benefit to the school and the district. It would be beneficial to develop a plan of action that addresses the goals and expectations for the professional development program within the funding limitations set by the budget. Permitted conferences and workshops should pertain directly to the work of the school and the staff who will benefit from them and the school and district should take the responsibility to implement it. Teachers believe that instructional improvement would result from their being allowed to observe best practices from other teachers in North Haven and other schools, and need to be assured release time and substitute coverage in order to be able to do so.

During the visit, the committee received many different opinions about planning opportunities at the school. During interviews teachers related they believed they had adequate planning time and meeting time to support their instruction. The World Language department was the exception since no common planning time has been allocated within the schedule. Daily team meetings are held by grade level to discuss the academic and behavioral progress of all students including special education and at-risk

students whose goals are revisited during the meetings as well. Once a week, grade levels meet by department to collaborate and share instructional ideas that have been successful in the classroom and monitor how grade level goals and objectives are being met. During the visit teachers were observed meeting in their grade-level teams sharing information about specific students' academic and social needs, discussing assignment modifications, and reporting results of special education testing, with the team leader providing guidance when needed.

At the same time, common planning time is used for administrative tasks as well. Teachers stated that the time they are required to spend analyzing data from common unit assessments, including the CREC Assessment and CMT, was an ineffective use of their time. For example, the teachers stated that they had been using formative assessment data from classroom observations, homework, in-class assignments and discussions to gauge students' mastery of materials. Unfortunately, by the time the summative assessments have been completed, scored and returned, teachers and students have moved past that material and therefore the data is no longer relevant. Multiple teachers reported not using the data from these assessments at all. Teachers indicated they, while they understand and appreciated the importance of data analysis, the timing of the work diminishes its value.

Though limited access to technology was a recurrent concern that surfaced during discussion, reporting of adequate availability of classroom resources varied across content areas. The science and art departments reported consistently having adequate supplies and resources to support effective instruction. Teacher interviews confirmed that budgets allocated sufficient funds for science lab and art supplies. One social studies teacher was grateful to have relatively up-to-date U.S. History textbooks, while a sixth-grade teacher described theirs as "barely adequate" and expensive to replace. A Spanish teacher indicated that there are no textbooks available for her particular level and that she gathers materials she needs to teach from a variety of sources. Many teachers expressed concern that they spent additional monies of their own to purchase materials. Every department indicated the need for additional supplies and materials but, from the larger perspective, there was general satisfaction with what is available at the school.

To align instructional procedures with North Haven Middle School's mission statement, lesson plans include embedded components to address the academic and social-emotional needs of students. Staff stated that this is done inconsistently, and greater emphasis needs to be placed on this requirement. Students described their classes as "fun" and "challenging" and committee members on their walk-throughs saw much evidence of students doing authentic, personally-relevant work. However, there was evidence also of students lacking a sense of engagement in some classes, not having opportunities to talk with their peers about subject content during class, and being placed in an inappropriate level and having to conform to the unwritten guidelines of that level. Students spoke out about the tiered assignment system used to accommodate differentiation across content areas and expressed dissatisfaction with its confidentiality.

The state of Connecticut, through its TEAM initiative, requires that every new teacher be formally mentored. The self-study reports, "Each new teacher is appointed a mentor to

offer instructional support. Teachers reported various levels of satisfaction with the mentorship process. An interview with a teacher indicated that mentors are assigned on an "as-needed" basis, though she felt that her strong relationship with her colleagues on her team provided the support she needed. It is evident that the assignment of mentors is inconsistent and a more formal mentoring program would be beneficial to new teachers. There were mixed reports about the value of the evaluation system as it is currently administered. The system calls for the following: "administrators observe/evaluate classes both formally and informally and be available to teachers if their expertise is needed." The lack of formal feedback was pointed out as an area of concern. While teachers meet with administrators and share informally their mutual thoughts and concerns, the final product consists of a self-evaluation and self-feedback but little formal administrative feedback. The regular, formal observation and evaluation process should be reviewed by both staff and administration and should be used to provide teachers with specific, regular guidance in improving their instructional practices.

### **COMMENDATIONS**

North Haven Middle School is commended for:

1. demonstrating staff enthusiasm, professionalism, and collegiality to improve instruction
2. implementing the process to create a written curriculum for every subject area.
3. providing a variety of academic enrichment opportunities beyond the school day in spite of a lack of transportation.
4. offering classes that are fun and challenging.
5. allowing teachers to take risks to improve instruction by instituting and following up on best practices for middle level education.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Visiting Team recommends that North Haven Middle School:

1. develop and implement a plan to integrate differentiated instruction into the teaching strategies and practices of all teachers
2. develop and implement a process to evaluate the current academic leveling in light of the best practices of differentiated instruction
3. establish and implement an SBRI process
4. develop and implement a technology plan for the school that creates better access to technology and meets the teaching and learning needs of staff and students
5. ensure regular, consistent observation by administrators of teacher performance followed by timely feedback to improve instruction in all classrooms
6. develop and implement a plan for professional development opportunities to ensure they support teachers' needs in the areas of differentiated instruction, technology, and data analysis



## ASSESSMENT

### OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The North Haven Middle School utilizes a variety of assessments to determine student progress. The Connecticut Mastery Tests, which are mandated by the state, set rigorous standards for language arts, science and mathematics and are tightly aligned with the district curriculum. The CMT process includes using pre and post-tests to prepare for the test itself. An important part of the CMT process is to ensure that the district curriculum is aligned with the state standards, and, as the district has undergone curriculum revision, this has been a priority.

The visiting team observed that the staff used a multitude of commercial assessments that measure academic and social expectations. Examples discussed in the self-study and in teacher conversations include: the Woodcock-Johnson Test of Achievement (WJIII), Test of Written Language (TOWL), Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT), Gray Reading Silent Test (GRST), Test of Reading Comprehension (TORC), Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE), Test of Silent Word Reading Fluency (TOSWRF), Weschsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT), and Key math testing.

Teachers also create their own formative assessments. Some are done by individual teachers, while others are done as a team or content area group. Some examples include, science lab reports, fitness tests, sculptures, research results, power point presentations, as well as peer assessments, written assessments along with written and oral responses to evaluate student learning. During the visit, some teachers provided evidence of student self-assessments which were used to invite students into the assessment process.

Teachers stated that they believed that the teacher created formative assessments were probably the most authentic measure of students who are adolescents, because most teachers developed them with individual students in mind, thus tailoring them to learning styles and developmental levels. The use of different teaching strategies inter-relate with assessment practices. The visiting committee saw examples of cooperative learning, higher order thinking skills work, hands-on activities, video/audio presentations, questioning, differentiated instruction and direct instruction among many. Each called for its own customized assessment strategies which were created and, in many cases, shared by the teachers. According to the self-study, supported by conversations with both staff and administration, these strategies are new to the school, and they require further experience and training. Nonetheless, the attempt by staff to modernize an otherwise traditional assessment system is noteworthy. The visiting committee learned from conversation and some observation that the leveling system, which has trappings of the junior high model, is a barrier to customized, personalized assessment. It still is reflective of large group assessment and, although the tiered system is in place, it still does not personalize assessment. The mission of the school calls for the latter, but

change seems to have come slowly.

North Haven Middle School, through its departments, reviews and analyzes the CMT scores to determine how best they can improve the teaching and learning process. Teachers use them to strengthen and enhance their teaching. Groups of teachers analyze them to look at the curriculum as a whole and make judgments about which concepts are being addressed well and which need shoring up. The administration looks at them from a whole school position to determine strengths and needs and to use the information to drive goals and objectives for the next school year. Time prevents the school from making a deeper analysis of the relationship between the CMT and current teaching and learning, but there was a sense among the teachers that if more time was available for data analysis, more information could be gathered which would help improve instruction.

Each of the content groups is in the process of completing or has recently completed its revision of the curriculum. The data which is available from the analysis of the test scores has been influential in setting the parameters of the new curricula. Units are being moved to ensure that something being tested has been addressed before the administration of the test itself. Different content groups collaborate to ensure support of a particular strand. Writing prompts are embedded into each curriculum to enable the students to develop the skill they will use during the testing. Special needs are also addressed.

The use of data to make curriculum and instructional decisions is demonstrated by the analysis itself. Comparing the numbers over a short period of time indicates that there is a steady improvement in the results of the testing. Each of the departments has been able to measure improvement and commits itself to using that data to improve instruction.

When compared to the District Reference Group, North Haven students ranked first in 7th grade writing, 8th grade writing, and 8th grade science. Teachers provided instances in which they changed a lesson plan or a unit plan to accommodate data received from the testing analysis.

Student involvement in self-assessment depends most often on the desire of the teacher to become involved. While teachers who were interviewed discussed the value of self-assessment as a means of controlling one's academic fate, the self-assessments used by the staff were fairly similar. Much of the self-assessment flows from cooperative learning groups or hands on activities such as musical performances, art projects and physical activity. There are specific activities which different content areas can use such as self-correcting pre-tests or developing graphic organizers to demonstrate their work.

Students are well aware of how to incorporate a rubric into a personal assessment of what they have done and how well they have done it. The majority of teachers use rubrics in one form or another.

North Haven Middle School uses PowerSchool, an on-line, web-based reporting module that can be accessed by parents. All students receive grades quarterly, and parents are prompted through the PowerSchool system to check on assignment completion, grades and as interim reports. Parents can reach teachers by phone, email or set up notifications

through PowerSchool. The principal sends periodic reminders to parents to check their PowerSchool account. Parent teacher conferences are held in the late fall so that teachers have gathered sufficient information to give parents an accurate overview. Teachers are also encouraged by the administration to maintain contact with the parents of students whose grades are not meeting expectations.

The results of the Connecticut Mastery Tests are mailed directly to the parents when they become available. Total school results are published both online and in the press for the benefit of the whole community. An interpretation of the CMT results is available and parents can receive more in depth information upon request of the administration.

North Haven Middle School curriculum and instruction embraces the Connecticut Mastery Standards as the basis for student assessment. Teachers explained that the school uses a letter grade configuration on the report card. The letter grade is a summative expression of all the assessments which have been completed in relation to the Mastery Standards. The teachers feel strongly that the letter grade is an adequate representation of the student's adherence to the standards, because the rubric is given to the parents and students early in the year and, subsequently, maintained on line. Parents showed no evidence of concern with the grading procedures. The visiting committee has commented on its concern with the leveled system of placement in a school which is advocating individualized and customized learning. If and when the move from homogeneous grouping to heterogeneous takes place, letter grades will not be seen as sufficient reporting devices. An honor roll and high honor roll are in place which utilizes cutoff average scores of 90 and 95, which are translated from the letter grades.

The professional development which is focused on assessment is generally connected to the administration and analysis of the Connecticut Mastery Tests. Teachers have a strong interest in increasing the time spent on the analysis so that it can more accurately be used to improve instruction.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

North Haven Middle School is commended for:

1. the wide range of formative and summative assessments across curricula areas
2. the variety of ways standardized assessments are reported to the North Haven community
3. the implementation and use of PowerSchool
4. the commitment to ensure the new curricula reflect the state standards

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The visiting team recommends that North Haven Middle School:

1. provide additional professional development time, training and resources for staff to understand and use current research on assessment for middle schoolers
2. create a school wide data team that can analyze and report student data to staff and the community
3. evaluate the use of a standards based report card for North Haven Middle School

## LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

### OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

At North Haven Middle School, there is a clear effort from the school and the community to recognize and support the academic, social and emotional achievements and to develop intervention strategies to meet the needs of all students. The principal provides the leadership by collaboratively developing a strong vision, setting a direction for the school and community to follow and establishing an emphatic focus on student achievement. He demonstrates that leadership, not only by setting direction and monitoring the change and growth, but also by participating directly in the life of the school. It was clearly noted by all members of the visiting committee that the principal was engaged with students and staff in the hallways, classrooms, lunch room and after school. He is actively interested in both the students and the faculty and establishes an atmosphere in which students and teachers feel free to go to him to discuss any concerns or to celebrate any successes.

The principal takes on many roles as part of his leadership style. He participates as the administrator on many committees such as Substance Abuse Prevention Committee. He leads the ZOOM team, an after-school running club. He works on the group that has developed and is implementing the Teacher Evaluation Plan. He joins the PTSA in establishing awards to recognize the good work of students three times a year. He publishes a newsletter which is sent home to inform parents and community members of the happenings at the school. In addition, he is responsible for the full academic program, professional development of the faculty and the facilitation of student growth and achievement.

The principal is joined by two assistant principals who share the leadership functions as a team. Assistant principals have a primary concern with student discipline and scheduling. At the same time, the principal includes them in a collaborative manner to meet and accomplish the administrative goals of the school. Students and assistant principals are linked for the duration of the student stay at North Haven Middle which serves to nurture consistent relationships and positive results. The collaborative leadership model extends to team leaders who act as the liaisons to the administration and as the ògo toö person within the team itself. All teams have a leader except for Unified Arts. In conversations with teachers, the visiting committee was told that the leadership model provides everyone access to the person responsible for a particular phase of the program. The leadership, from the principal to the team leaders, is always accessible and willing to assist teachers in accomplishing their goals

At the same time, there is an expectation on the part of the principal that the professional and support staffs have an equal responsibility for implementing and adhering to the mission of the school. The faculty members indicated during the interviews that they work together to establish student expectations by promoting the **4 P's** and establishing a

climate of positive thinking and achievement. At one meeting a teacher said that the faculty clearly believed that students were the first priority at North Haven and, while the faculty's task was to support the students, it was also important to build a framework for personal and social growth for students to use.

Faculty members have opportunities to participate as leaders on professional committees. The Staff Senate is a committee whose purpose is to interact with the administration and present any issues or concerns which affect the school, the student body or the profession.

Students are grouped in teams with each grade level having three. The team faculty consists of those teaching the four major content areas of language arts, math, science and social studies. Other subject area teachers are either assigned to a team or serve with multiple teams. A special educator is available for each group as well. Student social and emotional needs are supported by three guidance counselors, a nurse, a social worker and a full time psychologist.

Students are grouped both heterogeneously and heterogeneously depending on the grade level and subject area. The self-study speaks about slower moving, average and advanced classes. It also labels some science classes as accelerated. During the visit, it was obvious to the team members that the grouping was being used as differentiation without any reference to the individual students. Large scale grouping according to ability levels leads to teacher directed instruction which is in contrast to the best practices of a middle school. In discussions with teachers, both Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Bloom's Taxonomy were used to describe how instructional practices are devised and implemented, but the use of leveled grouping has limited the effectiveness of the attention paid to the individual student's growth and development in relation to his or her peers. Throughout the visit, teachers talked about the need for additional professional development to emphasize differentiated instruction and a better understanding of that will give students greater opportunity to develop their own skills. Both the administration and faculty have made inroads toward a more heterogeneous approach, but there needs to be a comprehensive approach to determine how best to provide a challenging and equitable education for all students.

The student schedule impacts the decision to move to a system of heterogeneity. Some faculty described the schedule as being too rigid to enable change. Others described it as a mixture of a middle school model and a junior high model and thought that, by merging the two models, the school was meeting the needs of all the students. Others saw the schedule as being developed without reference to student needs and its firmness limited the changes and flexibility needed to deal with adolescent needs. There is an obvious need to decide which model takes preference, and from that use the schedule to support the philosophy rather than the other way around.

Communication between home and school consists of a monthly newsletter, the "Alert Now" telephone system, the reporting program called *PowerSchool* and parent conferences. The school completed a parent survey as part of its self-study and when asked about communication, 71% of the parents responded positively. Parents are

welcome to initiate contact with the school as well. Both the faculty and administration make themselves available during the week, and respond to emails and phone calls.

Teachers expressed a concern that while both Power School and Alert Now provide excellent technological communication opportunities, they have reduced the number of one on one or face to face meetings with parents. One teacher noted that the increase of technological communication means that face to face meetings only take place when there is a crisis, and there are fewer opportunities to share positive achievements with parents.

School rules for student behavior, as well as consequences for infractions of the rules, are clearly stated in a handbook and disseminated to students and parents at the beginning of each year. Students also have the rules posted in an assignment notebook which they carry with them. Opportunities exist for teachers and students to talk about the rules and to take time to ensure that there are no ambiguities. The handbook is written specifically with North Haven students in mind, and they are developmentally appropriate.

Conversations with students brought out the fact that students were very conscious of the rules and expectations, and it was clear to the visiting committee, as it moved through the classrooms, corridors and cafeteria that students were aware of their responsibilities as members of the school community.

Teachers and administration interact when the rules need to be addressed. There is a system of discipline which begins with the classroom teacher and, as the issue becomes compounded, moves to the administrative level. The teachers indicated some concerns with the different ways in which the administrators handled similar situations. The perceived lack of consistency caused some frustration. At the same time, the administrators were clear that when the issue came to their level, it was necessary to be sure each student was treated individually and that all sides of the situation were included in their evaluation of it. Teachers also expressed some frustration with each other, noting that the level of consistency in imposing consequences varied widely from teacher to teacher and team to team. While seemingly not a major issue, it is one that has the potential to undermine the efforts of both teachers and administrators to do what is best for the student and the school.

Students are invited to report misbehaviors when necessary, and some do. When this concept was raised with the students during the team visit, they indicated that this was not part of what they did at North Haven. They did say that if there was a safety issue before them, they might report it, but to report misbehavior would be a difficult thing to do. At the same time, the students were very cognizant of the *4 P's*. They explained them as the framework for how they were supposed to act and function as students at North Haven. The visiting committee was impressed with their understanding and commitment.

The visiting committee observed positive, respectful interactions with students and staff at North Haven Middle School. Students are aware of the behavior expectations, and teachers model them throughout the building. Although corridors are somewhat congested, teachers took the time to acknowledge student greetings and waves and often initiated conversations with the students by inquiring about a sibling or an assignment.

Students reacted in a similar fashion, enjoying the familiarity and the interplay. Students told the visiting committee that the school provided spirit days when students wore crazy hats or different kinds of shirts. The students appreciated the fact that members of the faculty participated in those days as well. Students said that they felt safe in the building and indicated that they would depend on the adults in the building to keep them safe.

They spoke about lockdowns and security drills which have become part of the routine, but they always came back to their trust in the teachers.

The self-study stated that there are high expectations at the school. When this topic came up in discussion, the description of high expectations was framed in a discussion of the honor roll and the high grades required for inclusion on the honor roll. The visiting committee did not see, however, how this applied to those students who were not included in the higher level courses. When the question was asked to describe the high expectations for the students in the slower moving groups, responses focused on the need for professional development to enhance the use of differentiated instruction. However the visiting committee noted that, before professional development can begin, the faculty and administration must agree on the direction in which the school will go, and a clear, comprehensive action plan with timeline must to be developed which addresses homogeneity versus heterogeneity, scheduling to accommodate student needs versus program needs, and a full understanding why the school needs to move from a mix of teacher directed and student centered instruction to simply student centered instruction. As a matter of contrast, the visiting committee observed high social expectations for all students regardless of their academic status. Attention to behavioral expectations and adherence to the 4 P's were expected of everyone.

Teachers and students made it clear that constructive risk-taking was encouraged in the building and within the classrooms. The principal is supportive of teachers who want to try something new, and teachers encourage students be open to new ways of doing things. Students commented that, when they are in after school programs, they have the opportunity to try something which is not included in their daily work. Those staff members who work with students after school try to meet their individual needs.

The constituencies of the North Haven Middle School community demonstrate collegial respect and cooperation. Their willingness to share instructional strategies, focus on academic achievement and address the adolescent needs the students bring every day shows their motivation and common purpose to foster student success. It is clear that the staff and students take pride in the school facility, and space, while limited, is maximized to its fullest potential. There is strong evidence from parent meetings of respect and trust for the principal and staff for maintaining a high quality learning environment.

The North Haven Middle School community successfully recognizes the social and academic achievements of the students. In addition to the principal's Student of the Month presentation, student work in the form of music performances, written assignments, art, and other projects are widely displayed throughout the school. The school recognizes students in the principal's newsletter, local press releases and on the website. Teacher successes are also acknowledged during faculty meetings and school



board meetings.

There are evaluation programs for all positions at North Haven Middle School. In 2009-10, a new teacher evaluation program was initiated which includes assigning both a supervisor and an evaluator to each teacher. Observations are continuous throughout the year both formally and informally. Pre-conferences and post-conferences are integrated into the protocol and, depending on years of service and successful evaluation, the cycle of observation is not as intense. Information from the conferences is used to set goals and address instructional needs. The new program has had one complete year in practice, so a full evaluation will help to sort out the problems, but there is a concern that the post conferences are not being handled in a timely manner.

There are emergency plans in place for a variety of situations. In addition to fire drills, there are plans for lockdowns. The faculty agrees that the plans work well, but they also said that there was a need for more practice drills. With teacher turnover as well as student turnover, practice would ensure greater familiarity. The self-study identified a concern with the large number of windows and the vulnerability of students in a classroom in the case of a security violation.

The professional development program at North Haven Middle School has, over the past two years, been primarily dedicated to the NEASC process, limiting its investment in areas which would address specific needs. When professional development time has been available, the subject matter has been determined by the central office to accommodate a perceived need. Teachers have expressed the need for using professional development time to review and understand best practices in differentiated instruction. Discussion with teachers focused on the need to involve staff in the development of PD programming to ensure that building needs are being met. Recently the central office revived a Staff Development Committee for that purpose.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

North Haven Middle School is commended for:

1. the collaborative approach to leadership established by the principal
2. the strong presence of mutual respect among the various constituencies of the school community
3. the use of productive communication tools by the school to inform parents and the community
4. the initiation of a new Teacher Evaluation Program
5. the clearly stated and understandable rules for student behavior
6. the faculty's consistent support of adolescent development
7. the opportunities for students to seek assistance from teachers and support personnel
8. the integration of the 4 P's into behavior expectations

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The visiting team recommends that North Haven Middle School:

1. Develop and implement an action plan, with timeline, that addresses the following:
  - a. Resolves the issues of homogeneous and heterogeneous groupings at all grade levels
  - b. Review the schedule and ensure that it is meeting student needs rather than program needs
  - c. Develop a process of discussions and reflection centered on the need to move from teacher directed instruction to student centered instruction
2. Review disciplinary procedures to ensure consistency among the three administrators
3. Review the policies for the number of fire drills and lockdown drills per year and implement them
4. Develop a protocol that ensures that every formal observation is always accompanied by a pre and post conference
5. Develop a plan to use professional development to support building needs

## **SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR STUDENT LEARNING**

### **OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

The student support services at North Haven Middle School are designed to support student learning and enable each student to participate and benefit equitably from those educational programs offered at the school in concert with the school's mission statement. The services are varied and tailored to meet the many academic, social and emotional needs of middle level students. They include special education programs, academic support and expansion, early intervention processes, reading support, speech and language therapy, counseling, occupational and physical therapy and health services. Library and media services, an extended day program, the Creative Learning Program, extra-curricular activities and summer school specifically support both academic and adolescent needs.

The wide variety of special services requires a multi-talented faculty who can accommodate the individual needs of the students in need. They include eight special education teachers and six paraprofessionals, an Early Intervention Coordinator, a librarian and library clerk, a nurse and part time secretary, three counselors, a social worker, a school psychologist, a speech language pathologist, a district occupational therapist and two full time reading specialists. In addition, there is a school resource officer, who is shared with the high school, as well as physical therapists, who are part of a contracted service.

The Creative Learning Environment Program (CLP) is designed specifically for students recommended by the faculty who recognize them as gifted and/or talented. The Extended Day Program offers specific programming of interest to middle level students for a fee. The summer school program has a twofold purpose ó remedial support and enrichment, and North Haven Middle offers a transition program for fifth graders in the four elementary feeder schools. Over 25 extracurricular activities are offered during the year in addition to varsity sports and the Extended Day Program.

North Haven Middle School offers a broad, comprehensive approach to supporting the academic, social and emotional needs of its students. The diversity of opportunities for students meets the expectations of the mission in that the varied social and emotional needs of middle level students can be addressed by one or more of them. The visiting committee was impressed, not only with the breadth of services, but also the individualization of those services. Conversations with parents were very supportive of the work of the special needs department, with one parent emphasizing the time and attention the staff had given her student. During the visit, the committee was unable to see firsthand the wide variety of services provided, but it observed the support of special education students in the classroom as well as in specialized instructional areas. Paraprofessionals and special educators were seen delivering instruction in the classrooms, in unified arts classes and computer labs.

Discussions with the various student support personnel left no question that there are good relationships among them and the interests of the students are foremost in their daily approaches to work. There is good communication between and among them; each of the sectors works with the academic teams to ensure that student intervention is not isolated but involves all staff. Special education staff maintain close relationships with teachers housing their students and work closely with them on developing strategies, goals, accommodations and grading.

Support services at North Haven Middle School require the involvement of the regular education staff. When the middle school teams meet, there is generally a special education teacher among them to offer support for their classroom strategies as well as to advocate for particular students. When required, various therapists or counselors are invited to join those meetings. The aim of this process is to identify student needs early in their development in the hopes of intervening before they become more of a concern.

Although there are numerous opportunities for students to receive ancillary support services, they are also impacted by certain limitations. There is no after school transportation, reducing the access to after school activities. There is no ELL teacher to accommodate the learning needs of identified students. There is little opportunity for the special education staff to train and consult with the paraprofessionals. There is limited access to the library during the day for students. Technology as a learning support is inefficient and insufficient. The numbers of students requiring nursing attention diminishes the nurse's effectiveness as a school-wide health professional received adequate training.

For the most part, the support services areas are adequate, ensuring student privacy and confidentiality. There is sufficient room to provide the many programs, but the space is not always designed to meet the needs of the particular service. Private waiting areas for students and/or parents for some services do not exist. The bathroom in the nurse's office is not handicapped accessible. Appropriate spaces for occupational and physical therapy are lacking. Specific areas for behavioral issues would be helpful.

The school website is a primary source of support service information. Various services post general and specific information on an as-needed basis. Special education staff uses the same techniques as the regular staff ó phone calls, email, website and face to face meetings. *Power School* enables staff to communicate technologically with the home. Within the building, communication usually takes place at regular team meetings, face to face or at specifically designed meetings about a student need. When this topic of discussion took place between the staff members and members of the visiting committee, the staff provided a multitude of examples of how well communication worked among them.

There is no formal evaluation program to assess the effectiveness of the support services at North Haven Middle School. Parents questioned the need for a formal evaluation, saying that their satisfaction was sufficient. Teachers saw the services as discrete and, if an evaluation were to be incorporated, it would be best to evaluate each service

separately. The visiting committee saw that there were a variety of informal evaluations across the breadth of services. The self study also identified some of them such as a self study done by the guidance department annually; or personal observation and evaluation of the health services by its supervisor; or a committee overseeing the Creative Learning program; or the commonly used, system-wide teacher evaluation process.

Staffing levels are adequate in the guidance area where there are three counselors, each of whom loops with a particular class. The counselor/student ratio is about 300/1, and it is supported by both a social worker and a school psychologist. Health services are supported by one full time and one part time nurse. In addition, a number of staff members have been certified in both CPR and first aid and act as supports in an emergency. However, the daily attention to the students who walk in during the day warrants additional nursing support to allow the current nurse to follow through on her administrative tasks. One librarian, a secretary and a computer aid staff the library media services section. While this seems sufficient, an increase in student use during the day would warrant additional staff.

Interviews suggest that the school community finds the support staff to be both well qualified and sufficient. Some regular education staff commented that they would like to see more paraprofessional support for the students with specific learning disabilities. Some of the paraprofessional staff feel they are being asked to perform duties (i.e. make modifications, teach math and/or reading skills, assist with health care, etc.) for which they have not been trained adequately. Special education staff are impacted by the recent reduction of special needs paraprofessionals during the year of the visit. Although the number of adults providing services was reduced, the level of service was not. Special education teachers indicated clearly that, while the level of service was not reduced, the intensity and effectiveness of the service was. Continued reductions could affect how students' IEPs are being met.

The guidance department is well organized and well supported, and its program is comprehensive. The counselors are responsible for students with 504 plans, and initiate a variety of options to help students with social/emotional issues. Whether one on one, small group or classroom based, the counselors address the many issues facing middle levels students from the academic to adolescent behavior to career counseling. Parents spoke very positively about counselor interaction and reaction. A survey conducted by the school gave strong praise to the counseling department.

In spite of the fact that there are a large number of services available, they are student specific and do not necessarily address the general, day-to-day needs of adolescent growth and social behavior. Students willingly identified their favorite teachers and counselors, but, when asked to whom they would go with a problem, question or concern, there was ambivalence. In a discussion about advisories, students indicated that it might be an idea worth pursuing.

The Library Media Specialist oversees the library-media center. The facility itself is large and spacious and includes a variety of areas including large teaching spaces, quiet

areas, appropriate offices, storage and a professional library. There are facility issues which limit its effectiveness which include inadequate wiring, handicapped accessibility, lighting, inadequate computer area, extension cords running on the floor impacting safety, and no cable TV access. Staff discussion identified air quality as an issue. While the air quality meets minimal standards, according to the facilities manager, improvement is not on the horizon. The library is, however, a very warm and welcoming area and teachers will use it as an alternate classroom when working on a research project.

The library is open and available to students before school, during homeroom and after school two days per week. During the school day, a student may access the library with permission of his or her subject teacher. Teachers may sign up to bring a full class to the library, and a schedule is drawn up for both the library and the computer lab. Unfortunately, not every teacher seeks access to either the library and/or lab so not all students get the opportunity to use the facility or the materials therein. The librarian is willing to collaborate with teachers on a research project, providing direction, guidance and resources. Students do not have access to a formal library skills program; however, the librarian is available at all times to support students.

The library uses the Follett software to access the library collection. The librarian has undertaken a serious program of weeding and replacement in the past year, resulting in a collection which surpasses 10,000 holdings. 40 % of the collection was published after 2000. However, the 12+ books per student is far below the state standard of 25, and the community needs to make a commitment to bring that up to the required level.

Health services are guided by state mandate as well as past practice. The health department conducts screenings to check for identified issues and coordinates, when necessary, with the child's personal physician. The nurses create health care plans for students with allergies and other serious ailments. The nurses assist guidance staff in the preparation of student 504 plans and to discuss student health issues. Referrals to other professional staff as well as outside agencies are made when necessary. Many students arrive unannounced at the office daily with a variety of ailments or a need for counseling and direction. The increase of students with medication is significant. Additional staffing is necessary to ensure that assessment and treatment is timely.

All health records are maintained in a confidential and secure manner.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

North Haven Middle School is commended for

1. the wide range of services of academic, social, emotional and health-based - provided to support the learning and emotional needs of the middle level student.
2. the guidance program, which offers a variety of services and programs to support students, staff and parents.
3. the strong interfacing of the various services with each other to ensure that student needs are met

4. the communication both among the student services staff, and between the staff and families
5. providing quantity and variety of educational journals and resources for teachers in the professional library
6. the wide array of after school opportunities for students
7. the commitment to provide programming to meet the needs of students with special gifts and talents

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The visiting team recommends that North Haven Middle School:

1. investigate reallocation of resources and special education case load numbers for equity among and between teams
2. complete a study that measures the requirements of all IEPs against the validity of recommended time.
3. evaluate the library collection and implement a plan to ensure that a wide range of materials and information resources are available to support all curriculum areas
4. develop and implement a long range plan to increase the library collection to meet the state standards
5. develop and implement a program to provide library informational skills to all students
6. initiate discussions about the feasibility of an advisory program for all students
7. complete a study that assesses the staffing levels of the nursing office in light of the student needs for health services

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR STUDENT LEARNING

### OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The policies which guide North Haven Middle School and the funding which supports them is the responsibility of the North Haven School Board. The school board, as representatives of the community, has struggled with budgetary issues over the past number of years. The visiting committee found that there had been a contentious history regarding budget requests in the town, and, when there had been a need for a referendum to decide spending limits, it failed more often than not. As a result, while funding is generally described as adequate, continued reductions have limited the school board's opportunities to improve its educational program and facilities. In addition, cost overruns attributed to the new high school building have put a strain on the community and weakened community support for budget expansion. During the visit, many staff members pointed out programming and staffing cuts which have been made in previous years due to financial constraints within the district. Last year's budget, however, was proposed and accepted at a level which ensured no reductions in programs. According to the self study the per pupil spending for North Haven is about \$2000 less per pupil than surrounding communities, and while the neighbors spend about 60% of their budgets on education, North Haven spends 52%. These facts were supported by discussion with community and school board members.

In spite of the budget reductions, the community and its school board should be commended for continuing to support a strong Arts K-12 program. Fiscal issues have called for creative planning to maintain programs when community support has marginalized the budget. According to parents and teachers, the community has been very supportive of programs such as the drama cooperative, the numerous bands, and the choir. The school board and community also support the school's commitment to developing life-long physical fitness. The retention of a block period for the Unified Arts including: Art, Music and Physical Education programming speaks to the commitment of the community and school to enable students to pursue talents not seen in alternate settings.

The problems with funding are very clearly seen in the condition of the middle school building, which is not conducive to a good middle school program. The structure itself, beginning with the roof which requires trash buckets strategically placed throughout the building to catch the leaking water to the poorly maintained toilet facilities to the need to bring the wiring infrastructure up to code to accommodate technology, is in poor shape. In addition, the state of technology at the middle school does not meet the expectations or address the needs of those programs which are espoused by the board and community. Further discussions revealed that even given funding and technology, the infrastructure of the middle school cannot support the power requirements of the updated technology. The delay in replacing the roof is a direct fallout from the budget issues and this delay impacts



the whole building, the programming and the efficient use of the many different systems which contribute to the health and safety of students and staff.

Although the school facilities meet occupancy codes and OSHA regulations for health and safety, the visiting committee noted that the facilities are out of date and minimally adequate for a 21st century middle school. The building's capacity for present and future programming is limited. The auditorium can only serve grade level assemblies one grade at a time, leaving whole school activities unavailable. Science lab equipment was barely adequate for most science rooms, being limited and antiquated. Science rooms are not adequately positioned to meet the requirements of the STEM initiatives called for by federal and state governments. Some classrooms not specifically designed to be science classrooms were being used as such and had limited access to electrical outlets necessary for science experiments raising a potential safety issue. Other meeting spaces for teams are limited, and areas for differentiated group work are non-existent. The building itself had visible signs of age and water damage. Faculty lavatory facilities were few, and student lavatories lacked adequate space and show clear signs of lacking long-term maintenance. Lockers were broken and falling off the wall and present a potential hazard. Classrooms had extension cords hanging, taped up or lying across the floors. Wireless internet is not accessible in many parts of the building. Some of the technology such as televisions and laptop computers are hand me downs. A capital improvement plan is in place and it is linked to the community's five year plan.

Unfortunately, the community has set aside some of the priorities, such as the school roof, because of funding. The 2006-2011 capital improvement plan included roof replacement money for the 2011 year at a cost of \$2,000,000. However, the 2011-2016 capital improvement plan has pushed that repair back to 2013-2014 with the same level of funding. Many tiles in the ceiling show the damage caused by the leaks. There is a strong unpleasant musty odor throughout the building. Staff verbalized concerns for health and safety concerning air quality. The facilities manager was very candid in reporting that there is little that can be done with air quality assurance and standards which was a concern of the visiting committee. Minimal improvements have been made to all school buildings in recent years. Last year, the capital budget for maintenance and improvements was cut to \$10,000 for the entire district, which was used to upgrade doors in an elementary school.

Outside sources contribute to supporting the school the PTSA and the Education Foundation have been instrumental in providing student activities and other building needs. The PTSA organizes and implements several fund-raising events which help to support programming that enhance the social and academic success of the middle level child. They provide teams with budgets of \$600 for educational field trips, sponsor guest speakers and a self-esteem workshop for girls. In addition, they raised money that was used to buy a kiln for the Art Department. The Foundation, which is a community group, has actually funded a computer lab.

The budget process begins with the department coordinators who submit requests to the principal who, upon review, submits them to the superintendent. There is little

involvement for the teaching staff except to provide initial information to the coordinators. The absence of a formal budget request process is seen to contribute to an inequitable disbursement of funds and equipment. Some teachers are asked to submit purchase requests by the department coordinators, while others are not. In a previous budget, an Eno board was purchased, but limited training and lack of ceiling mounted projection made it an inappropriate acquisition for effective classroom use. Furthermore, other specific teacher requests for technology for classroom use have been cut from the budget. Instructional technology necessary for 21st Century classrooms is severely limited and not equally and efficiently accessible to all students. Teachers must sign out LCD projectors daily for instructional purposes. The term used consistently around the building when describing funding is "adequate". It is clear that budgetary constraints have severely impacted the delivery of programming and achievement of the mission statement.

The lack of late bus transportation, previously cut from the budget, has directly impacted student accessibility to after school programming especially with respect to equity, social development and academic success.

There is a strategic plan for technology currently in the second year of a three year process. However, there was limited evidence that significant and appropriate progress has been made. The PowerSchool and PowerGrade online grading program has been implemented. Parents report accessing the information weekly, students report using the information and support staff also report accessing student information to help improve academic progress. Refurbished laptop computers are assigned to all teachers. LCD projectors, purchased through fund raising events, are available for teacher use through the library media specialist. However, there is much frustration with accessibility. Teachers must sign them out daily and the supply is limited. The existing computer labs are booked solid. It is clear that much work still needs to be done in this plan. According to the principal, the primary goals in the technology plan require funds that are not presently available. The hit or miss approach to technology makes clear the need for a revised technology plan to provide for the acquisition of hardware and software commensurate with the needs of a 21st century classroom.

Another critical concern is the lack of purposeful and meaningful middle school centered professional development. In order to meet the purposes of the mission statement and the goals of a strong middle school in a K-12 model, a regular, consistent, outcome-based program of professional development must be an integral part of the school budget. Currently, academic teachers and support staff reported a lack of professional development on technology and new initiatives such as SRBI and PowerSchool.

In discussions with parents, they seemed content with the level of involvement they have in the students' academic achievement, social growth and decision-making at North Haven Middle School. They are glad to have online access to grades to monitor their child's academic progress. Parents felt a part of the educational community because they are able to speak to the principal, who has an "open door policy," and the accessibility to

teachers is excellent. Teacher conferences occur once a year, and additional teacher meeting time is available upon request.

The local colleges send interns and student teachers to the school for observation and training. This enhances the students' learning showing them that learning is ongoing. The continuous partnership between the school and local colleges serves to develop the next generation of educators while providing a bit of career modeling for the middle school students.

Students have many opportunities to interact with their community. Students described the benefits of participating in the Best Buddies program supported by the Rotary Club. During the student tour, one student discussed how his participation in this program was an opportunity to become friends with someone he wouldn't otherwise have known. The Bike Club is able to refurbish old bicycles at a low cost thanks to their partnership with the local bike shop. These are then donated to the town department of community services and recreation. Club S.M.Y.L.E. is a group of middle school students who reach out to the older community members at the North Haven Senior Center by getting together with them and enjoying activities. These programs highlight some of the various ways the school facilitates community involvement of the students.

Generally speaking the building is clean. Several staff members mentioned the hard work of the custodians who are on duty. The vast majority of cleaning is done by the contracted company Master Custodial with the exception of a few areas which are cared for by either the two daytime custodians or the one nighttime custodian employed by the school. As per the contract there are certain cleaning tasks that are completed daily while others are done quarterly or annually. All custodial staff are trained in the procedures for dealing with blood-borne pathogens and asbestos awareness.

The building is in compliance with applicable federal and state laws. There is a certificate of occupancy issued to the schools and the fire chief has indicated that the building is in compliance with all fire, health and safety codes. However, during the visit there was an obvious infestation of rodents in the computer labs and other locations in the building. An exterminator was called during the visit to eliminate the problem. There is a schedule for exterminator services for the cafeteria only, although the company will respond to other calls. The renovation in 1986 covered code upgrades and paint. Since then, little has been done on capital improvements.

Food service is contracted to Chartwells which is in compliance with all state and federal regulations as determined by the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Three years ago the kitchen was renovated and updated. The State Bureau of Health and Nutrition performed a review in May of 2009. The staff in the cafeteria has monthly training on various topics. There are several choices for students daily which comply with nutritional standards.

Student transportation is contracted out to Winkle Bus Company. All drivers are trained and have been licensed by the state to transport students. Bus safety training is handled by the contractor. There were no issues with bus safety at arrival or dismissal.

### **COMMENDATIONS:**

The North Haven Middle School is commended for:

1. the multitude of meaningful opportunities afforded the students beyond the academic day in spite of a lack of transportation.
2. the commitment to meaningful time devoted to students in the pursuit of health, wellness and the arts.
3. the partnerships with the PTSA and North Haven Education Foundation that help to support the mission statement of the school
4. the commitment of the school board to the middle school programming in spite of budget reductions
5. the consistent availability of both staff and administration to parents

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The visiting committee recommends that North Haven Middle School:

1. develop and implement a plan to address a health and safety review of all areas of the building
2. develop and implement a plan to review how best to use or upgrade the current building to accommodate the needs of a 21st century middle school
3. develop and implement a plan for scheduled maintenance of new and old equipment throughout the building
4. review the current technology strategic plan, and modify it to meet the needs of a 21st century middle school
5. review the current budget procedures and implement a unified budget request process that ensures equitable access to resources throughout the school.
6. work cooperatively to develop and implement a plan for meaningful and appropriate professional development
7. develop and implement a transportation plan with an afterschool late bus for after school programs to enable students to access them equitably

## CONCLUSION

On behalf of the Visiting Committee I commend all those who contributed time and energy toward the completion of the self-study, as well as toward the preparation and hosting of the peer review team. We have enjoyed participating in this professional experience with you.

We hope that this visiting committee report, in conjunction with the strengths and needs determined during your self study, will serve as rich resources for your short and long term planning and that they will assist you as you continue to strengthen education for your students.

Upon your receipt of this report, you should review the commission's guidelines for dissemination, action planning, and follow-up. It is suggested that the school appoint an action planning committee or steering committee to review the visiting committee reports and recommendations and to divide them into meaningful categories ó whether according to the Standards or according to another relevant format. However, the recommendations are divided and whatever timelines are drawn, the follow-up process must remain relevant to your particular school.

As previously stated in the introduction, this report has also been mailed to the Commission on Public Elementary and Middle Schools's committee on Middle Level Schools for an in-depth review and recommendation regarding accreditation. The recommendation will then be forwarded to the commission itself for final approval.

Depending upon the commission's recommendation, the school may be requested to submit one or more special progress reports in the years prior to, and following, the five-year report. At the five-year mark the school must submit a report explaining the status of all the team reports recommendations ó whether completed, in progress, planned for the future, no action as yet, or that the school feels the recommendation should be rejected.

In conclusion, the visiting team wishes to recognize and applaud the commitment of the North Haven Middle School staff and school community to the ongoing process of continuous improvement. We sincerely hope that this report proves to be a useful guide to work collaboratively as North Haven Middle School moves forward with an even greater realization of your mission. It was a pleasure for us to be a part of this process with you. We wish you the very best in your continued success and dedication to the children of North Haven.

## VISITING COMMITTEE ROSTER

Peter Warburton, Chairperson	SAU # 53	Pembroke, NH
Valerie McKenney Assistant Chairperson	Rochester Middle School	Rochester, NH
Alberta Landino	Dodd Middle School	Cheshire, CT
Jackie Coffey	Sanborn Regional Middle School	Newton, NH
Ellen Page	Martin Kellogg Middle School	Newington, CT
Theresa Biagianrelli	Walter C. Poison Middle School	Madison, CT
Kerry Sullivan	Galvin Middle School	Wakefield, MA
Nancy Sylvain	Dr. Robert H. Brown Middle School	Madison CT
Laurie Belanger	Freetown-Lakeville Middle School	Lakeville, MA
Laura Kirshenbaum	Whitcomb Intermediate School	Marlborough, MA
Jennifer Thompson	Unity School	Newport, NH
Debra Phillips	Cameron Middle School	Framingham, MA
Karen Lavery	Maranacook Middle School	Readfield, ME
Cathy Hayden	Maranacook Middle School	Readfield, ME

## **NORTH HAVEN MIDDLE SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT**

### **The staff of the North Haven Middle School:**

- provides a safe and secure environment conducive to teaching, learning, and mutual respect
- provides an environment that promotes the importance of literacy which is fundamental to lifelong learning.
- provides a rigorous and relevant curriculum that will enable students to meet their academic, social, and personal potential
- believes that continual staff development is vital to the productive learning environment.
- believes that students and families share in the responsibility for education.

### **The students of North Haven Middle School:**

- demonstrate effective literacy and communication skills through reading, writing, speaking, and listening
- think critically and creatively in order to pose and solve authentic problems.
- integrate research skills and technology into their academic pursuits.
- demonstrate the responsibility and persistence needed to be successful in their endeavors
- demonstrate respect for themselves and for each person's individuality.

## STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION



Teaching and Learning Standards

Mission and Expectations for Student Learning  
Curriculum  
Instruction  
Assessment of Student Learning

## **Mission and Expectation**

The mission statement describes the school's role as an integral part of the educational community. The mission statement emanates from the school's beliefs about education and its purpose, and leads to a set of expectations enabling the school and its community to assess its effectiveness.

1. The school has a mission statement, which addresses the school's beliefs about teaching and learning and reflects the character of the school, the unique developmental characteristics of the middle level child and the values of the community and its educators.
2. The school has high, clearly stated and measurable expectations for academic achievement for all students. These expectations include a description of the different levels of performance as well as indicators of the successful attainment of each.
3. The school has high, clearly stated expectations for social behavior, which are developmentally appropriate and address the needs of the middle level child.
4. The school community establishes, accepts and supports the mission statement and expectations for academic achievement and social behavior.
5. The school provides observable and measurable examples of adherence to the mission statement and expectations for academic achievement and social behavior.
6. The school sets a clearly defined cycle for the review and revision of the mission statement and expectations to ensure that they adapt to the changing needs of the students and the educational community.

## Curriculum

The curriculum is the formal plan designed by the school to carry out its mission statement and to meet its expectations for academic achievement and social behavior. The curriculum links expectations for student learning to instructional and assessment practices. The strength and effectiveness of the curriculum are dependent upon the commitment of the school and district to a continuous process of implementation, review evaluation and revision of the curriculum which leads to improved student learning.

1. The school's formally written and implemented curriculum is aligned with the school's stated expectations for students' academic achievement and social behavior.
2. Each curriculum area has clearly articulated learning standards that support the school's academic expectations.
3. The content of the curriculum is intellectually challenging, respectful of diversity and allows for the authentic application of knowledge and skills.
4. The curriculum includes coursework, co-curricular activities and other school approved educational experiences which meet the needs of the middle level child.
5. Effective curriculum coordination, integration and articulation exist between and among all subject areas within the school as well as with all receiving and sending schools.
6. There is an ongoing process for curriculum review and revision which actively involves the school's faculty and takes into account the stated academic expectations and assessments of student performance.
7. The written curriculum incorporates classroom and school-wide library resources.
8. The written curriculum incorporates classroom and school-wide technological resources.
9. The school provides sufficient staffing, time, professional development, fiscal resources, materials, technology, and supplies to implement and support the written curriculum.

## **Instruction**

Effective instruction is the single most important factor affecting the quality of student learning. It is aligned with the mission statement and expectations for academic achievement and is the connection to curriculum and assessment, as well as student performance. It takes into account individual student needs, learning differences, interdisciplinary activities and student engagement in a variety of ways. Self-reflection and interactive dialogue with colleagues is necessary to ensure success.

1. Classroom instruction is based on current research and embodies the school's stated beliefs about teaching and learning.
2. Classroom instruction is designed to enable all students to meet the school's high expectations for academic achievement.
3. Instruction facilitates learning by including practices that are personalized, exploratory, self-directed, authentically based, reflective and integrated across the curriculum.
4. Instruction ensures the development and application of higher order thinking skills and problem solving abilities.
5. Instructional strategies incorporate various technologies to improve student learning.
6. The school provides sufficient staffing, time, professional development, fiscal resources, materials, technology, and supplies to support effective instruction.
7. Ongoing discussion of improving instruction as it relates to student learning is a significant part of the professional culture of the school.
8. Teacher supervision improves instruction and enhances student learning.

## Assessment

Effective assessment practices ensure that student progress is measured in relation to the school's stated academic expectations. Assessment also provides teachers with opportunities to evaluate and adjust instructional practices to improve student learning. Assessment and its analysis provide the opportunity to develop long and short-term strategies to improve curriculum and instruction across the school. Assessment results inform the school community about school progress.

1. The school utilizes an ongoing assessment system that embodies the mission statement and expectations for academic achievement and measures progress in meeting those expectations.
2. Classroom assessment strategies, reflective of current assessment research, are integrated with instructional practices.
3. Student assessment results are analyzed, discussed and used by the faculty and administration in the review, evaluation and revision of the curriculum and the improvement of instructional strategies.
4. Students are active learners who reflect upon and assess their own learning.
5. The assessment of student learning is communicated regularly to parents through a variety of procedures.
6. There are identified learning standards for each subject area which are the basis for grading and reporting.
7. The school provides sufficient time, staffing, professional development, fiscal resources, materials, technology, and supplies to support effective assessment procedures.
8. The school systematically interprets and reports assessment results to the community.

Support Standards

Leadership and Organization  
School Resources for Learning  
Community Resources for Learning

## Leadership

Leadership is the collaborative responsibility of administration, faculty and support staff to achieve the mission and expectations of the school. The manner in which a school organizes itself, makes decisions and treats its members affects the atmosphere in which teaching and learning take place. The school climate fosters mutual respect, as well as opportunities for reflection and growth among students and staff and welcomes the meaningful involvement of parents and community members.

1. The principal, in conjunction with the educational community, provides leadership by developing and maintaining a vision which ensures a focus on the academic and social growth of the middle level child.
2. Professional and support staff share the responsibility for implementing the school's mission and to maintain the academic and social expectations for students.
3. The principal provides meaningful opportunities for the staff to assume leadership roles.
4. Student grouping practices reflect an understanding of the unique learning and social needs of the middle level child and demonstrate an awareness of the diversity of the student body.
5. The school implements a process of clear, consistent and meaningful communication within the building, within the district and throughout the community.
6. The school establishes developmentally appropriate rules and consequences for student behavior that ensure the well-being and safety of students, which are understood and supported by the educational community.
7. The school has a climate that is positive, respectful, structured and safe. It is highly energized and encourages growth, change, renewal and constructive risk-taking among students and staff.
8. There is evidence of mutual respect, common purpose and support among all members of the school community.
9. The work, contributions and achievements of all students and school personnel are regularly acknowledged and celebrated and appropriately displayed throughout the school.
10. The school has a clearly defined process for the evaluation and supervision of

faculty, staff and administration which is used to improve student learning.

11. The school has a planned orientation and program for administrators, faculty and support staff.

12. The school has clearly defined crisis/emergency response plans and all occupants are familiar with these procedures.

13. Parents, teachers and community members feel welcome at the school. They are encouraged and provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the school's decision-making process.

14. There is a planned program of professional development, collaboratively structured by administration, faculty and staff which supports the school's mission and expectations for academic achievement and social behavior.



## **School Resources for Student Learning**

Student support services and programs are designed to enable each student to participate in and benefit from each of the educational programs within the school and to meet the expectations for academic achievement and social development. The school provides a range of services which include guidance, library and media services, special education services, and health services.

### **All Student Support Services:**

1. The school provides student support services, programs and resources to ensure that each student has an equal opportunity to achieve the school's expectations for academic achievement and social development.
2. The school's student support services are designed to support the learning and emotional needs of the middle level child and are consistent with the school's mission and expectations for academic achievement and social development.
3. Student support services personnel interact and work cooperatively with other school personnel and community resources to address the academic, social, emotional and physical needs of the middle level child and to enhance student learning opportunities.
4. The school's student support services programs are housed in areas which are appropriate to the support provided and ensure privacy and confidentiality.
5. There is an effective and ongoing system of communication with students and parents which keeps them informed and knowledgeable about available student support services.
6. All school support services for learning are regularly evaluated, reviewed and revised to support improved learning.
7. There shall be sufficient certified/licensed personnel and support staff to provide effective counseling, health and special education services.

### **Guidance Services:**

8. The school shall provide a full range of guidance services, including: individual and group meetings with guidance personnel; student course selection assistance; collaborative outreach with community mental health agencies and social service providers; and appropriate support for the delivery of special education services for

students

9. There are opportunities for advisories, teams, and students to receive peer and adult support through small communities (i.e. teams, group counseling) and through various programs that instruct and/or counsel students in effective decision making.

**Library/Media Services:**

10. The library and media services program is housed in an area with adequate physical space and is staffed by professionally trained and qualified personnel and supervised by a certified library/media specialist.

11. The library and media services program is readily accessible to students as an integral part of their educational experience, fostering independent and collaborative learning, and supporting the research needs of the students.

12. Library and media services personnel are knowledgeable about the curriculum and support its implementation and integration.

13. A wide range of materials and information resources is available to students and faculty in a variety of formats, to meet the learning needs of the middle level child and to improve teaching and learning.

14. Policies are in place for the selection and removal of resources and materials and the use of technologies and the Internet.

**Health Services:**

15. The school's health services include:

- preventative health services and direct intervention services
- emergency response
- ongoing student health assessments
- appropriate referrals

**Special Education Services:**

16. The school provides special education services related to the identification, monitoring, and referral of students in accordance with local, state, and federal laws.

## Community Resources for Student Learning

The community supports the school by providing consistent and sufficient funding for programs, services, personnel, and facilities. It sustains a learning environment that ensures the safety and well-being of all students. Active community and parent involvement is essential for the achievement of the school's mission and expectations.

1. The community, through the district's school board, sets and implements district and school policy and ensures that an adequate and dependable source of revenue creates a framework for educational opportunity for all students.
2. The community, through the district school board, provides and maintains appropriate middle level programs, personnel, professional development, facilities, equipment, technological support, materials and supplies for student learning.
3. There is ongoing planning by the school and the school district to address future programs, staffing, facility and technological needs as well as capital improvements.
4. Faculty and building administrators have active involvement in the budgetary process including its development and implementation.
5. There are meaningful opportunities for parental involvement in the student's academic achievement and social growth as well as decision-making at the school.
6. The school seeks strong community relationships through productive partnerships with businesses, higher education and community groups and provides opportunities for mutual interaction between the students and the community.
7. The school site, plant and equipment support and enhance all aspects of the middle level educational program and support services for student learning.
8. There is a planned and adequately funded program of building and site management that ensures the maintenance and cleanliness of facilities and equipment as well as the health and safety of all who use the facility.
9. The physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health and safety regulations.
10. If food services are provided, the area, menus and equipment ensure that the well being of the students is a priority and is in compliance with state and federal regulations.
11. If transportation is provided appropriate procedures are in place to ensure the safety of the students.