

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS



REPORT OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE

New Milford High School

New Milford, CT

May 3-6, 2015

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STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS

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

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

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

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INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

- Teaching and Learning Standards
 - Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations
 - Curriculum
 - Instruction
 - Assessment of and for Student Learning

- Support of Teaching and Learning Standards
 - School Culture and Leadership
 - School Resources for Learning
 - Community Resources for Learning.

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

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit - The School Self-Study

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At New Milford High School, a committee of 18 members, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned all teachers and administrators in the school to appropriate subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities and facilities available for young people.

The self-study of New Milford High School extended over a period of 23 school months from May 2013 to April 2015.

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

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

The Process Used by the Visiting Committee

A visiting committee of 15 evaluators was assigned by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate New Milford High School. The Committee members spent four days in the town of New Milford, reviewed the self-study documents which had been prepared for their examination, met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students and parents, shadowed students, visited classes, and interviewed teachers to determine the degree to which the school meets the Committee's Standards for Accreditation. Since the evaluators represented public schools, and central office administrators, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of New Milford High School.

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 48 hours shadowing 14 students for a half day
- a total of 53 hours of classroom observation (in addition to time shadowing students)
- numerous informal observations in and around the school
- tours of the facility
- individual meetings with 24 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and the assessment of student learning
- group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers
- the examination of student work including a selection of work collected by the school

Each conclusion in the report was agreed to by visiting committee consensus. Sources of evidence for each conclusion drawn by the visiting committee appear in parenthesis in the

Standards sections of the report. The seven Standards for Accreditation reports include commendations and recommendations that in the visiting committee's judgment will be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning and to better meet Committee Standards.

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

School & Community Summary

New Milford High School, located in New Milford, Connecticut, serves the communities of New Milford, Sherman, and Gaylordsville. Located on the southwestern border of Connecticut, north of Danbury, New Milford is the commercial center of Litchfield County.

According to the most recent census data New Milford has an approximate population of 28,000. The community includes the following demographics: 6.0% Hispanic, 2.8% Asian American, 1.7% Black, and 2.1% other/two or more races. The median household income in New Milford was \$80,792 from 2009-2013.

The majority of residents are employed outside of New Milford. The town is home to the industries of Kimberly Clark, Chemical Marketing Concepts, Neeltran, and Edelman Leather. In 2011, the unemployment rate was 6.1% and 14.5% of the school population lived below the poverty level.

In addition to New Milford High School with a population of 1394 students, Schaghticoke Middle School includes 748 students and Sarah Noble Intermediate School includes 1024 students. The three elementary schools house 548, 458, and 456 students for a total of 4,628 in the New Milford School District. Approximately 280 students (5.9%) attend the non-public schools, Faith Preparatory School (PK-12) and Canterbury School (9-12).

For the 2012-2013 school year the New Milford School District was ranked 160 of 169 districts in terms of per pupil expenditures and expended \$12,231 per pupil compared to a state average expenditure of \$14,500 per pupil. Federal and other resources accounted for 2.6% of all funds received in the district, leaving 97.4% of funding to be obtained through local resources. During the 2012-2013 school year \$45,431,401, or 78.93%, of the school budget was covered by local taxes. One student paid nonresident tuition fees of \$10,956 to attend New Milford High School in 2011-2012.

According to the Strategic School Profile for the 2012-2013 school year New Milford High School includes students in grades 9-12 with the total enrollment of 1394 students divided between 700 males and 694 females. The school population has decreased 7.0% over the past five years. The ethnic, racial, and cultural composition is currently 4.0% Asian American, 1.9% Black, 7.5% Hispanic, 0.7% two or more races, and 85.9% white students. During the 2012-2013 school year 6.5% of students came from homes where English is not the primary language. The number of non-English home languages is twenty. The average dropout rate for the past two years is 0.9%, the average daily student attendance is 93.0%, and the average attendance rate among teachers is 89.7%.

There are 123.6 teachers, a library media specialist, instructional specialists, counselors, social workers, and school psychologists at New Milford High School, creating a ratio of 13.4:1. Individual teachers carry an average load of 98.8 students with an average class size of 13.77. In those classes required for graduation, the average class size is 21 students. Students attend school for 181 days and for a minimum of 1013 hours.

The majority of students select from general¹, academic², or honors/Advanced Placement classes. Thirty-seven percent of students are enrolled in honors/Advanced Placement classes and 68% in college preparatory courses. Approximately 10% of students receive special education services. All students graduating in the class of 2015 or 2016 are required to take four years of English, three years of mathematics, social studies, and science, two years of physical education, one health course, one fine/practical arts course, with the remainder of the students' programs filled from a variety of elective courses including three world languages. The Board of Education has established a plan to increase graduation requirements for students with regard to both overall credit requirements and credits for specific subject areas beginning with the graduating class of 2017. New Milford High School offers a variety of co-curricular and extracurricular activities for its students. Approximately 97% percent of students participate in at least one activity each year.

In the class of 2012, 89.8% attended two or four-year colleges with 5.8% entering the military or civilian work force. Graduates take advantage of the considerable educational opportunities available as they choose from such colleges and universities as University of Connecticut, Western Connecticut State University, Sacred Heart University, Central Connecticut State University, Quinnipiac University, and Fairfield University. Opportunities for continuing education are available at New Milford Adult Education, Henry Abbott Technical School, Porter & Chester Institute, University of Connecticut Torrington Campus, and Naugatuck Valley Community College.

New Milford High School has established partnerships with local businesses, including Tasty Waves Frozen Yogurt, Big Y, Boehringer Ingelheim, New Milford Animal Welfare Society, and the New Milford Public Library. Additionally, students and staff at New Milford High School have sponsored numerous drives and events to benefit the local community including food drives, blood drives, and our annual STAR Project (collection of winter boots and books to be donated to Social Services) campaign. Juniors and seniors gain real world experience through courses offered where the expectation is that students will complete an internship with a local hospital, business, or other organization. Students receiving special education services have the opportunity to participate in the work exploratory program.

New Milford High School has also established an effective partnership with Naugatuck Valley Community College. This partnership allows students to take courses for college credit while still in high school. These courses include Algebra III, Early Childhood, Anatomy and Physiology, and a course in ecology. Fourteen percent of juniors and seniors are enrolled in one or more courses for college credit.

Students are recognized for their accomplishments through a variety of programs such as the Student of the Month award, given each month by each department; the Rotary Student of the Month Award, given each month to a senior at a luncheon sponsored by the New Milford Rotary Club; Positive Principal Phone Calls, and a Most Outstanding Service and Most Improved Breakfast held annually in May. In addition, New Milford High School has implemented the WAVE program in which students are recognized for demonstrating character traits such as cooperation, courage, loyalty, integrity, citizenship, respect, responsibility, honesty, compassion, and perseverance. Each spring the school honors students in awards assemblies recognizing individual student achievement in academics and athletics as well as hosts a scholarship evening.

¹ Beginning in the 2015-2016 school year general level classes will be called Introductory.

² Beginning in the 2015-2016 school year the academic level will be referred to as college preparatory.

**New Milford High School
Home of the Green Wave**



**21st Century
Learning Expectations**

Communication

- Students communicate information clearly and effectively in a meaningful way using a variety of methods.

Problem Solving

- Students analyze, synthesize, and evaluate to solve problems.
- Students independently and collaboratively set and accomplish goals.
- Students demonstrate innovation and adaptability in various environments.

Civic & Social

- Students demonstrate personal, social, and civic responsibility within our community and global society.

Technology

- Students demonstrate technological literacy using relevant research tools to access and collect information to formulate new understandings.

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

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

CURRICULUM

INSTRUCTION

**ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT
LEARNING**

Teaching and Learning Standard

1

Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

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

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

CORE VALUES AND BELIEFS

Conclusions

The school community engages in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research-based practices to identify its core values and beliefs about learning in a limited way. However, the New Milford High School (NMHS) school community has made a conscious commitment to its core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. In April 2013, a team of four teachers from social studies, math, English, and world languages attended a workshop offered by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) concerning core values, beliefs, and expectations for student learning. This team later developed NMHS's core values acronym "WAVE," which stands for Work, Achieve, Value, and Empower. The acronym WAVE connects to the New Milford High School mascot, the Green Wave, which is familiar to everyone in the school community. Each key word in the acronym has a sentence associated with it to clarify its emphasis. The word "Work" is clarified as: "Work to become lifelong learners and peer collaborators." "Achieve" is clarified as "Achieve through hard work, honest reflection, and self-advocacy using critical thinking and problem solving." "Value" is explained as: "Value civic responsibility and the diversity within our community." "Empower" is clarified as "Empower students and teachers to become curious, innovative, and insightful." In May 2013, the team presented the proposed acronym to the faculty and asked them to complete an online survey to solicit their views about the representative value of the acronym for their core values. In May 2013, NMHS teachers and administrators in the NEASC Standards committees agreed upon the WAVE core values and beliefs. Parents and students report that they were not involved in the development of the acronym or the outlined core values and beliefs, but believe that they reflect the school community's convictions about learning. Parents and students responding to the Endicott survey report that they are familiar with the core values and beliefs about learning. A majority (77.8 percent of students and 86.3 percent of parents) reports familiarity with the school's core values and beliefs about learning adopted by NMHS. While the creation, adoption, and promulgation of the core values and beliefs about learning has led to knowledge of the core values among all members of the school community, the development of the acronym and resulting survey and discussion was not an inclusive or collaborative process that included input from all constituents. Using a collaborative and inclusive process informed by current research enables all stakeholders to identify and commit to the school's core values and beliefs about learning. (self-study, parents, students)

The school has challenging and measurable 21st century learning expectations for all students which address academic, social, and civic competencies, and are defined by school-wide analytic rubrics that identify high levels of achievement. New Milford High School developed four challenging and measurable 21st century learning expectations for all students which address problem solving, communication, technology, social and civic skills and are defined by school-

wide analytic rubrics. A group of New Milford High School teachers developed the school-wide rubrics that measure academic, civic and social expectations. A team of two teachers developed the original rubrics after examining rubrics from the NEASC model showcase schools. The team distributed the rubrics to the professional staff for feedback via Google Docs. The feedback resulted in changes to the rubrics, and teacher volunteers were sought to pilot the rubrics in their classes. The principal reports that approximately sixteen teachers from various departments are volunteers who are employing the rubrics in their classes. Teachers confirm the rubrics are now in the pilot stage of development, but they are uncertain about a targeted level of student achievement. The principal further states that targeted levels of student achievement will not be determined until the rubrics have been fully vetted by the faculty. At the time of the NEASC visit in May 2015, the volunteer teachers were still using the rubrics as part of the pilot plan. A few samples of the student work that the school provided for visiting committee review included the use of these analytic rubrics, and they exhibited high order thinking and cross-curricular connections. Although the school has developed challenging learning expectations designed to prepare each of its students for the 21st century and is in the process of formalizing the use of analytic rubrics to assess achievement of these expectations, it has not progressed beyond the pilot stage of using them in some classes and, in the classes where the rubrics are being tested, the teachers are unable to tell students how well they are progressing because there is no targeted level of achievement. The development and use of consistent school-wide rubrics will provide a more effective measurement of whole-school and individual achievement of the school's learning expectations. (self-study, teacher interviews, student work, administrator interviews)

The core values and beliefs about learning at New Milford High School are reflected in the school's culture, however, it is unclear whether the core values and learning expectations drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom since the expectations are not being assessed by school-wide rubrics across the school, and curriculum documents do not emphasize the expectations specifically. Any decisions that are made concerning the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations are not contrary to the core values and beliefs, although few decisions have been deliberate choices based intentionally on them. Teachers and administrators explain that such practices and decisions flow naturally from the core values and beliefs because the core values and beliefs are ingrained in the culture of the school. The WAVE acronym has become a symbol of the core values and beliefs for the school community. The 2014 Endicott survey data indicate that 60 percent of the staff agrees that the school's core values and that the beliefs are reflected in the school's culture. Examples of the reinforcement of core values and beliefs for teachers and students are evident throughout the school. The Names program, an Anti-Defamation League (ADL) program, promotes the characteristics outlined in WAVE. True Colors is a program developed by a non-profit organization at The University of Connecticut (UCONN) that offers NMHS students opportunities to see that the needs of sexual and gender minority youth are recognized and respected. The NMHS Student of the Month

program recognizes two students per department per month for excellence in demonstrating WAVE characteristics. Thanks to an activity period, NMHS offers students the choice of 82 clubs and activities to foster their interests and future goals. Students at the panel presentation spoke of their involvement in the writer's club, the school newspaper, the video production crew, and the school television. The advisory program, that meets every other day, provides students with opportunities to connect with teachers and other students. Students are afforded open access to all courses and parents report that the process to change course levels is handled without difficulty. Teachers are aware of the school-wide rubrics and the pilot that is underway. Teacher interviews, classroom observations, student work, and students all reveal activities that make connections to the 21st century learning expectations, but there is no evidence that these activities were designed with the expectations in mind. The principal of NMHS maintains that school policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations are directed by the core values and beliefs, and the 2014 Endicott survey data indicates that 53.3 percent of staff reports that, when making important teaching decisions, they consider the school's core values and beliefs about learning. When NMHS has implemented the school-wide rubrics and all teachers and students are using them effectively, it will be able to ensure that the core values and beliefs, along with the expectations for student learning are informing all decisions about policies, procedures, and resource allocations and driving decisions about curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom. (panel presentation, classroom observations, student shadowing, student work, teacher interviews, facility tour, Endicott survey)

The school does not yet regularly review and revise its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, as well as district and school community priorities. In the fall of 2011, all staff members were involved in the writing of the 21st century learning expectations. The school's 21st century learning expectations rubrics are still in the pilot stage and the faculty and administration plan an aggregate review in the upcoming months. When the process is complete, the school will be able to develop a regular review process for the 21st century learning expectations and the core values and beliefs that provides representation of all community stakeholders and ensures that the core values and beliefs and learning expectations remain current and relevant, research-based, and reflect school and community priorities. (self-study, teacher interviews, administrators)

Commendations

1. The creation of the WAVE acronym that enables all members of the school community to recognize and understand the school's core values and beliefs about student learning
2. The many activities and programs that New Milford High School offers to students that reflect and reinforce the core values and beliefs about learning

Recommendations

1. Complete the review/pilot process of the school-wide analytic rubrics and implement the use of the 21st century learning expectations in all classes to ensure every student has the opportunity to meet all the school's learning expectations
2. Determine and publish the targeted high level of achievement for each analytic school-wide rubric.
3. Develop and implement a plan to ensure that the review and revision of the core values about learning and the 21st century learning expectations is a collaborative and inclusive process that employs multiple data sources and aggregate results of the school-wide achievement of the learning expectations

2

Curriculum

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

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

CURRICULUM

Conclusions

Some New Milford High School (NMHS) curriculum is designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations. The completeness of the curricula varies; some of the curriculum documents for high school courses have not been revised since 1998, while others have been updated within the last five years. To evaluate the alignment of the existing curriculum to New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Standards, the curriculum self-study committee created NEASC-aligned curriculum evaluation rubrics. Although most high school curriculum was developed prior to the 2011 NEASC Standards, roughly half of course curricula reviewed by the school's curriculum self-study group are rated as acceptable or exemplary using the NEASC-aligned evaluation rubrics. Because the district adopted and currently uses a new curriculum template that is based on the *Understanding by Design Framework* in 2011, most curricula written between 2011 and 2014 scored exemplary or acceptable during the self-evaluation, while curricula written prior to 2011 often scored as limited or not meeting the Standards. The course curricula found to be unaligned to school expectations or standards should be revised during the curriculum review cycle. Sixty percent of the school's staff believes that the school's formal curriculum design ensures that all students practice and achieve all of the school's learning expectations. The district has an ambitious five-year curriculum plan designed to ensure that all curricula will be no more than five years old by 2017-2018. Continued revision and alignment of the curriculum to the 21st century learning expectations will ensure that each student has the opportunity to achieve these expectations. (self-study, curriculum documents, Curriculum Standard subcommittee members, department leaders, Endicott survey)

Approximately half of the curriculum at New Milford High School (NMHS) is written in a common format that includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills; instructional strategies; and assessment practices that include the use of course-specific rubrics. Curricula that were written using the format adopted in 2011 include Common Core State Standards, enduring understandings, essential questions, discipline area standards, expected performances, character attributes, technology competencies, teaching strategies, learning activities, assessments including performance task and other evidence, and resources. Although course and department-specific rubrics are only sporadically referenced in the curriculum documents, teachers and departments commonly use such rubrics to define expectations for students and to establish consistency in evaluation among teachers. For example, department-wide rubrics are used in math and science and course-specific rubrics are used in other subjects. A team of approximately 16 teachers is piloting the recently developed school-wide rubrics aligned to NMHS's 21st century learning expectations. Once these rubrics have been formally

adopted, all teachers will use them to assess students' achievement of the expectations. Currently, none of the NMHS curricula explicitly incorporates or references the school's 21st century learning expectations because they were recently adopted. Communication, problem solving, and technology are present in some curricula, while civic and social responsibility expectations are generally absent. New Milford High School's use of a common format for curriculum development has benefitted teaching and learning by placing emphasis on essential questions, concepts, content and skills as well as suggesting teaching skills and assessment practices. The curriculum review process should ensure that all courses afford opportunities for all students to achieve the 21st century learning expectations and include assessment practices specifically related to the school-wide rubrics. (self-study, teacher interviews, curriculum documents)

New Milford High School (NMHS) curriculum varies in its emphasize on depth of understanding and application of knowledge through problem solving and higher order thinking, cross-disciplinary learning, and authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school. Emphasis on informed and ethical use of technology is in classroom practice, but is in curriculum documents. percent of the curriculum documents reflect problem solving and 55 percent reflects higher order thinking. Some curriculum documents provide evidence of problem solving and higher order thinking, especially Advanced Placement (AP), social studies and English courses. In other curricula, the prevalence of problem solving and higher order thinking is sporadic. A review of the suggested assessment strategies in curriculum documents reveals a wide degree of emphasis on higher order thinking and problem solving. Some suggested assessments showed a low emphasis on depth of knowledge and included non rigorous success indicators such as neatness and aesthetics, while others suggested rigorous measures such as providing comparisons of political ideologies. Teachers report that when the curriculum is outdated, teacher practice is "ahead of the curriculum." Teachers challenge students to problem solve or to use higher order thinking skills, nonetheless, a review of curriculum documents reveals limited references to higher order thinking. According to the five-year district curriculum plan over 60 curriculum documents are scheduled for development or revision in 2014-15. The curriculum template used by NMHS teachers to develop or revise curriculum, while inclusive, does not specifically address depth of knowledge or problem solving. There are several resources for curriculum development including the curriculum handbook and an article about *Understanding by Design*, but these documents do not emphasize depth of understanding or problem solving. In addition, the curriculum handbook does not specify how curriculum documents are reviewed to ensure that higher order thinking is included prior to submission to the board of education's committee on learning. Despite variations in depth of knowledge and higher order thinking skills written into the curriculum, parents and students state that courses at NMHS are appropriately challenging. There are two cross-disciplinary courses, American Studies and video production. However, there is little emphasis on cross-disciplinary learning in

other course curricula. However, 47.6 percent of students report that teachers include topics from other subject areas. Authentic learning opportunities are available to students through programs such as Project Lead the Way, Cut-Copy-Paste, and Med Tech; Curriculum documents for more traditional core courses reveal little emphasis on authentic learning, yet classroom observations and reviews of student work reveal a greater emphasis on application of learning to authentic situations. For example, math teachers use engineering and marketing topics to investigate and propose solutions. There is some integration of literacy skills in the content areas in the curricula. For example, teachers in the physical education department integrate reading tasks into every unit, and social studies teachers incorporate persuasive writing in the curriculum. The curriculum documents that are dated 2011 and later include Common Core Reading and Writing Standards. Informed and ethical use of technology is not emphasized in most curriculum documents. For example, in several curriculum documents, under the section entitled “Technology Competencies,” no competencies are listed; instead the only reference is “Embedded in the Common Core.” The Common Core Standards, which reference ethical use of technology, were listed under the Standards section, but the teaching and learning plan does not address technology use. In practice, there is attention to informed and ethical use of technology. The student handbook outlines student expectations and guidelines for the use of personal technology because district policy allows students to use their own digital devices. Posters with expectations for technology use are also posted in classrooms. Students report that at the beginning of the year teachers address the ethical use of technology. New Milford High School offers a wide range of courses that incorporate authentic learning opportunities and the appropriate use of technology. Embedding authentic learning opportunities and the opportunity for students to demonstrate informed and ethical use of technology into the development and revision of all curricula will ensure that all students are prepared for higher education and careers. The planned revision of curriculum documents will allow NMHS teachers to ensure a strong focus on higher order thinking and inquiry in the curriculum will lead to students’ deeper conceptual understanding of topics and more meaningful learning, thus enabling them to meet the 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, Curriculum Standard subcommittee members, teachers, classroom observations, curriculum handbook, students, Endicott survey)

There is a clear alignment between written and taught curriculum in most courses. During formal teacher evaluation observations, teachers submit lesson plans to their evaluator prior to classroom observations in order to demonstrate the alignment between the written and taught curriculum. In addition, informal observations ensure ongoing monitoring of teacher practices and curriculum implementation. The self- study committee reports that they collected and evaluated a selection of lesson plans to determine the degree of alignment with the written course curricula. Although the selection provided a small sample, the committee found a clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum in every sample. Classroom lessons are clearly aligned with course curricula. The Endicott survey indicates that 57.5 percent of teachers

agrees that the written and taught curricula are aligned. Also during common learning time (CLT) meetings, teachers review student performance data and address curricular alignment. Teachers' efforts to align the written and taught curriculum ensure that students achieve the learning expectations and mastery of the 21st century skills. (self-study, school leadership team, classroom observations)

While there is some purposeful curriculum coordination and vertical articulation between and among academic areas within the school and with sending schools in the district, it is not a regular or formal process. The district has a five-year curriculum development plan that clearly outlines which subjects are slated for revision; however, ongoing revision after development is limited. Teachers usually revise curriculum during the summer, but after implementation there is no formal process to make ongoing revisions. During curriculum implementation, CLT teams meet regularly and collaborate on implementation, but there is no mechanism to collect and embed suggested changes into the formal curriculum. On-going curriculum revision presents a challenge because the teacher contract specifies that curriculum revision is a supplemental activity compensated through established stipends. Therefore, revising curriculum during CLT time is considered inappropriate since no compensation is provided for the revision work. In addition, the stipend for summer revision is shared if the curriculum is written by a team of teachers. The New Milford Curriculum Handbook states, "Curriculum and instruction are never static. Curriculum is constantly evolving as we look for ways to improve student performance, enrich student experiences, and increase the academic caliber of our students." However, in practice, structured curriculum revision is infrequent. Aside from the aforementioned American Studies course and video production course, there is no formal curriculum coordination between academic areas within the school. There is an increased focus on vertical articulation within content areas within the school. In the past, individual teachers completed curriculum revision work. Recently, teachers have begun to work collaboratively with several teachers from the same department to write or revise curriculum. All teachers have the opportunity to participate in curriculum revision, including special education co-teachers. While there is limited formal curriculum coordination with sending schools, there is some communication between schools regarding student learning expectations. The district employs five district coaches including data coach, math coaches, and literacy coaches who informally help with K-6 and 7-12 articulation. However, vertical alignment, especially alignment between 6th and 7th grades, is a challenge because of time restrictions. Some efforts have been made to improve vertical articulation. High school department chairs meet informally with 8th teachers. High school math teachers and the math department coordinator communicate with 8th grade teachers to ensure students are prepared for 9th grade. Principals of the sending schools focus on building students' 21st century skills, such as independence and communication, to help students achieve success in subsequent grades. Improved and effective curriculum coordination and vertical articulation between and among all academic areas within the school and with sending schools in the district will create

continuity of student learning and will ensure that all students receive strongly coordinated and articulated opportunities to practice and achieve the school's learning expectations. (Curriculum Standard subcommittee members, school leadership team, district leadership, self-study)

Staffing levels, instructional materials, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library media center adequately support implementation of the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities; however, technology equipment is not adequate to support full implementation of the curriculum. Staffing levels, instructional materials, supplies, and the facilities are generally sufficient to meet the needs of the curriculum. According to the Endicott survey, the majority of professional staff agrees that the school has sufficient professional staff, instructional materials, and facilities to implement the curriculum and co-curricular activities. In addition, 80 percent of the students responding to the Endicott survey agrees that teachers provide students with the instructional materials needed in each course. Recently the math department purchased new textbooks for the algebra through geometry sequence to align with the Common Core State Standards. Despite a reduction in enrollment of 3.3 percent over the last three years, NMHS has benefitted from an increase in staff to address increased graduation requirements from 22.5 to 26 credits and the addition of two SAT-prep/Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) interventionists in English and math. According to the Endicott survey, 55 percent of teachers feels that their student load meets the learning needs of the individual students, and 77 percent of students agree that their class sizes are reasonable. Individual teachers carry an average load of 99.8 students with an average class size of 13.8. In those classes required for graduation, the average class size is 21 students. According to the Endicott survey, 74 percent of the staff agrees that the library media center provides a wide range of print and non-print materials, including technology and other information services that fully support the curriculum. NMHS has a certified library media specialist who has the expertise to support the embedding of informed and ethical use of technology into the curriculum, but her ability to support curriculum development is limited by her need to remain in the library to supervise students. All freshmen attend a library media center orientation which familiarizes them with the facility, procedures, resources, data bases, resources, ethical use of references, and how to determine the quality of sources. The library media specialist is currently pruning the collection to eliminate outdated material. According to the American Library Association's American Association of Schools Librarians standards, 86 percent of the age-sensitive portion of the NMHS non-fiction collection is outdated. With the support of volunteer retired teachers and parents, a project is now underway to analyze, catalogue, and cross-reference material within texts and books in the library. Recently, NMHS has increased the number of SMART Boards in 75-80 percent of classrooms and has purchased one hundred Chromebooks. Despite these improvements, 20 to 25 percent of classrooms still lack SMART Boards. Other instructional technology equipment, such as document cameras is sporadically available among departments. There are five computer labs in the building, but

these labs are not available for classroom use for approximately four months of the year because of their use to support the administration of the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) standardized assessments. The self-study reports that most of the computers in the school are more than five years old and, at times, the high school network has failed to meet the demands of the school population. Start-up time on older computers may be between five and ten minutes. Many laboratories and mobile computer laboratories need updated technology. Teachers report that the software and capacity of computers are not sufficient to adequately support the curriculum. The adoption of Bring Your Own Device policy has been helpful in ensuring student access to technology, but many students use smart phones that are inadequate because of their age or data capacities. Staffing levels, instructional materials, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center adequately support implementation of the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. Increased access to technology and equipment are needed to support teachers' efforts to fully implement the curriculum and to enable all students to acquire and develop technological literacy, so that all students will be able to meet the 21st century learning skills embraced by NMHS. (Endicott survey, teacher interviews, panel presentation, school leadership team)

The district provides the school's professional staff with personnel, time, and financial resources for collaborative curriculum development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research; however, the effectiveness of structures to improve the curriculum is limited. All teachers have opportunities to write and revise curriculum, but the process of signing up for revision work leaves gaps in completing curriculum revisions. The curriculum handbook states that teachers are responsible for delivering the curriculum and assessing its adequacy and effectiveness, but does not provide a formal process for teachers to communicate with the revision writers during the school year. Teachers have CLT time every four days and department meetings two times per month. Teachers use the time provided to discuss curriculum implementation, but not for curriculum revision. The five-year curriculum plan and teacher contract provide financial compensation for curriculum revision, but in meetings with administrators, the curriculum self-study committee, and teachers, the professional staff reports that the language of the teacher contract restricts teachers from revising curriculum with their peers during the school day. School leaders are working to increase the number of teachers working on curriculum, but teachers indicate that while stipends are available for curriculum writing, the stipend is inadequate when multiple teachers have to split the compensation when collaborating to complete the task. Some curriculum has been adapted based on assessment results. For example, the science department reviewed Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) results when revising curriculum. Teachers and administrators report that they have not had recent professional development on curriculum development primarily due to the emphasis on NEASC preparation. Providing the staff with time and financial

resources for collaborative curriculum development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum will ensure that the curriculum remains relevant and up-to-date and will provide students with opportunities to achieve the 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, teachers, school leadership team, curriculum documents)

Commendations

1. The embedding of the school's communication, problem solving, and technology expectations into curriculum since 2011
2. The inclusion of comprehensive units of study using Understanding by Design in curriculum since 2011
3. The inclusion of a variety of authentic learning opportunities for students in Project Lead the Way, Cut, Copy-Paste, and Med Tech
4. The efforts of teachers to align assessment and instruction with the written curriculum through their work during CLT time
5. The self-study committee's development and use of a rubric to assess the alignment of the curriculum with NEASC indicators for curriculum
6. The alignment between the written and taught curriculum which is supported through formal and informal procedures related to the teacher evaluation program
7. The review of student performance data and instructional practices during CLT time to determine the success of curriculum implementation and assessment
8. The guidance provided to teachers in the district-wide curriculum handbook and the five-year curriculum plan
9. The level of staffing, instructional materials, supplies, and facilities that support the implementation of the curriculum
10. The efforts of NMHS teachers to clarify for students the appropriate and ethical use of technology through classroom discussion and posting technology expectations
11. The efforts of the library/media specialist to support curriculum implementation
12. The creation of new positions to support both intervention efforts and SAT preparation in both math and English

Recommendations

1. Create a district and/or school-wide curriculum committee comprised of teachers and administrators to organize and support ongoing curriculum revision, vertical articulation, and curriculum evaluation
2. Incorporate higher order thinking skills and the school's 21st century learning expectations into all curricula
3. Include current research-based practices and resources into all curriculum documents
4. Ensure that all curriculum documents include both instructional strategies and assessment practices that include use of the school-wide rubrics and course-specific rubrics
5. Ensure that all curricula emphasize depth of understanding and application of knowledge
6. Incorporate standards and lessons concerning the informed and ethical use of technology into all content area curriculum
7. Evaluate and revise outdated curriculum using the NEASC-aligned curriculum evaluation rubric used by the self-study committee
8. Conduct a technology audit that investigates the adequacy of technology equipment, software, and programs to support implementation of the curriculum across all subject areas and address identified needs in a timely manner
9. Address issues connected to the use of CLT to revise curriculum

3

Instruction

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

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

INSTRUCTION

Conclusions

Teachers' instructional practices at New Milford High School are regularly examined to ensure that teachers are employing effective, research-based instructional strategies to meet student needs. Review of instruction occurs formally through the established teacher observation protocol and during common learning time (CLT), which takes place once every four days. The teacher observation protocol encourages frequent focus on instructional practices as teachers and supervisors discuss and reflect on instructional practices and techniques in relation to best practice. Teachers also report that CLT provides opportunities to create and analyze data from common formative assessments and to collaborate with colleagues about pacing and instructional methods. As required by the state, New Milford High School has established a teacher educator and mentoring program (TEAM), which pairs each new teacher with an experienced teacher for the purpose of examining instructional practices and creating goals for improvement. Teachers involved in this process frequently reflect on instruction and establish goals and action plans for improvements which focus on the engagement of students, effective classroom management strategies, and differentiating instruction. While teachers' instructional practices at New Milford High School are regularly examined, there is inconsistent emphasis on instructional practices that are intentionally informed by the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations within the classroom. New Milford High School has recently adopted the acronym "WAVE" (Work, Achieve, Value, Empower) as the means of representing the core values and beliefs, and has created a pilot program to begin use of the school-wide rubrics created to measure the 21st century learning expectations. The pilot program, however, consists of only 16 teachers, which leads to limited exposure and implementation within the classroom. According to the Endicott survey, of the faculty members responding 37.8 percent is undecided or disagrees with the statement: "teachers regularly examine their instructional practices to ensure consistency with the school's core values and beliefs about their learning." While a significant number of teachers believes that they examine their instructional practices to ensure that they align with the core values, beliefs and expectations, they are unable to share specific details with their colleagues or with students because they have not yet employed the school-wide rubrics. Because only 16 teachers are using the school-wide rubrics it is difficult to determine the extent to which instructional practices are consistent with the learning expectations. When all teachers employ instructional practices strongly linked to the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations, students will benefit from best practices in instruction that will enable them to meet the learning expectations and contribute to a positive school climate. (self-study, Endicott survey, teachers, administrators)

Teachers' instructional practices at New Milford High School (NMHS) support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by personalizing instruction, emphasizing

inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking, engaging students as active and self-directed learners and applying knowledge and skills to authentic tasks. While NMHS generally supports the school's 21st century expectations, limited instructional practices provide students opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning or engage students in self-assessment and reflection. Teachers in the practical arts and engineering departments frequently integrate technology into instruction on a daily basis, but the integration of technology to enhance instructional practices is limited in the core subject area classes. Most teachers support the 21st century learning expectations by personalizing instruction. For example, in a United States (U.S.) History class, students work in pairs to create their own version of a 1915 newspaper edition that created a sense of empowerment and ownership, which aligns directly to the school's core values expressed in the WAVE acronym and in school-wide rubrics. Student work shows personalized instruction that allows for self-directed learning. According to the Endicott survey, 80.8 percent of teachers agrees that they personalize instruction for their students. However, only 30.7 percent of students agrees that teachers personalize instruction to meet their individual interests, needs, or talents. According to the Endicott survey, 83.2 percent of NMHS teachers agrees that they emphasize the use of inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking in their instructional practices. In addition, 76 percent of parents agrees that teachers at NMHS employ these strategies in the classroom. New Milford High School teachers provide students with the skills to compete globally through inquiry, problem solving and high order thinking. These skills allow students to take ownership of their learning by reviewing their progress in real time. student work samples demonstrate teacher use of instructional strategies demanding students to think on a higher level, even though such skills are not emphasized in curriculum documents. Some examples of student work that requires problem-solving include an innovative roller coaster project and an airport project in math classes, a gumball machine in a technology class, and a case study that deals with financial analysis, interpretation, and self-reflection in an accounting class. Students at NMHS are challenged to apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks in the classroom. However, according to the results from the Endicott survey, only 51.9 percent of students agrees that they are challenged by their teachers. NMHS offers students an array of programs that provides them with opportunities to apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks during instruction. Project Lead the Way, the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) programs, and Cut/Copy/Paste are among the many programs that offer students learning activities that are project-based with real-life connections. Teachers' instructional practices engage students in cross-disciplinary learning, self-assessment and reflection, and the use of technology to a limited extent. The English and social studies departments currently offer American Studies co-taught by U.S. History and English teachers. Because of low enrollment numbers this course will not be offered for the 2015-2016 school year. While the majority of classrooms in the high school are equipped with SMART Boards, and those without have projectors, Interactive Multi-Media (IMM) tablets, or IMM pads as methods for projecting lessons electronically and providing connection to the Internet, not all teachers regularly use technology to enhance instruction. The self-study report mentions that teachers need further

professional development on the integration of technology into content-specific teaching strategies. While the practical arts and engineering departments frequently use technology as a consistent instructional tool, technology integrated into instructional practices is limited in core classes. While NMHS teachers employ instructional practices that personalize instruction, engage students as active learners, emphasize problem solving and higher order thinking, and apply knowledge to authentic tasks in many classes, teachers and students will benefit from engaging in self-assessment and reflection, cross-disciplinary learning, and the integration of technology to support learning. New Milford High School students will benefit when all teachers employ instructional practices that support their achievement of the 21st century expectations. (student shadowing, classroom observations, teacher interviews, panel presentation, Instruction Standard subcommittee members, Endicott survey)

Many teachers at New Milford High School adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of their students by using formative assessments, strategically differentiating, purposefully organizing group learning activities, and providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom. Teachers use a variety of informal assessments strategies to assess student understanding during instruction. Some examples of general assessment tools used during instructional time include think-pair-share, polleverywhere.com (online survey website), the use of individual white boards for student responses, and Kahoot (interactive online website). Other more formalized means of garnering information about student progress involve common formative assessments (CFAs). Through the use of these formative assessments, teachers receive feedback that determines the direction of instruction in the classroom. Teachers often incorporate the use of group learning activities during instructional time. Lessons demonstrating group learning activities such as projects and presentations, problem-solving tasks, and real-world simulations/scenarios are pervasive throughout core classes and the practical and fine arts. However, the integration of purposefully organizing group learning activities is less frequent. While some teachers purposefully group cooperative learning activities while considering social interests and being driven by the activity or the overarching goal, others use less structured means for planning. NMHS teachers strategically differentiate instruction by using a variety of instructional practices across subject areas. These strategies include, but, are not limited to, co-teaching models when the addition of another teacher in the room affords the possibility of individualized instruction; strategic grouping within lessons that allows the classroom teacher to provide services to students for one-on-one conferencing; and feedback given to students both on written work and through conversation during class time. Teachers at New Milford High School often provide additional support and individual intervention strategies outside the classroom. Teachers are available to students before and after school and during common free periods. While strategies are evident outside the classroom, additional support within the regular classroom is inconsistent. In some co-taught classes co-teachers instruct both regular and special education students, but the instructional dynamics vary within co-taught classes based on student

need and specific planning. New Milford High School teachers employ a variety of instructional practices that support individual student achievement of the school's learning expectations, including use of formative assessments to inform instruction and strategic differentiation, however, student will benefit further from the additional use of best practices regarding group learning and co-teaching practices. (classroom observations, Instruction Standard subcommittee members, panel presentation, student shadowing, teacher interviews)

By design, teachers at New Milford High School, individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices by engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice, examining student work, and by the use of student achievement data from a variety of CFAs. Across the school, time is built into the schedule for common learning time (CLT), which gives teachers the opportunity to meet to discuss student performance and the pacing and planning of instruction. While all teachers are formally involved in CLT, not all CLT enables all teachers to collaborate. There are instances in which a teacher may be the only department member scheduled during a specific period, thus prohibiting collaboration with peers. For example, in the world languages department, members of CLT with multiple teachers take on the additional responsibility to "check in" with other teachers scheduled as the sole member of a CLT. In order to formally assess the work being done during CLT, New Milford High School organizes a showcase in the library at the end of the year. At this time, each CLT group provides a summative review of the student work as well as data analysis and assessment. However, there is no formal note-taking or accountability process in place throughout the school year to determine progress in these areas. The district has recently created a position of data coach to assist teachers in the use of data to inform instruction and make decisions based on a variety of student performance data. Furthermore, teachers report that they need more training on how to analyze and interpret the data in order to modify instructional strategies. In addition, there is currently no formally established CLT for special education teachers. New Milford High School students benefit from the establishment of CLT sessions that teachers employ to examine student work, create assessments, and discuss different instructional techniques that support student learning. Teachers at New Milford High School formally use feedback from their colleagues and supervisors in order to improve instructional practices. In addition, teachers receive feedback through the teacher observation protocol. Through the clinical observation procedure, teachers receive feedback during post-observation conferences with their supervisors. The implementation of the recommendations provided at these conferences is undocumented and, therefore difficult to identify as a building block to enhance instruction. Teachers infrequently use feedback from parents in order to improve their instructional practices. According to the Endicott survey, 22 percent of parents agrees that teachers have asked for their feedback about their instructional practices. In addition, some teachers occasionally elicit and use feedback from students. Some teachers ask students for feedback at the beginning of the year in regards to individual learning styles, as well as at the end of the year in order to change future practices.

Some teachers also informally solicit feedback at the end of unit assessments and projects. New Milford High School teachers examine current research and educational publications at various faculty meetings and professional development days. When the school transitioned to a block schedule, teachers examined *Tools for Teaching in the Block* by Roberta L. Sejnost and took time during CLT to discuss its implications. Teachers also reviewed the book: *Classroom Instruction that Works* by Robert Marzano. Timely and adequate professional feedback on instructional practices and the use of current research to improve instruction will allow NMHS teachers to continue to improve their instruction which will increase student achievement and engagement. (self- study, panel presentation, teacher interviews, students)

New Milford High School (NMHS) teachers are adult learners and reflective practitioners who maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. According to the Endicott survey, 85 percent of staff, students, and parents believes that teachers at NMHS maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. There are opportunities for professional growth through a variety of workshops that help promote the 21st century learning expectations for instruction. Professional development workshops include SMART Board training, the use of Moodle (software), and Web 2.0. Most departments, as well as administrators, belong to content-specific professional organizations. For example, teachers belong to the National Science Teachers Association, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Council of Language Teachers, and National Council of Social Studies. Administrators' memberships include the American Association of School Administrators and the National Association of Secondary School Principals. Additionally, through allotted common learning time and the teacher education and mentoring program, teachers have the opportunity to work collaboratively to discuss current practices and instructional strategies. Because NMHS teachers are able to focus on professional development, have time for reflection and collaboration concerning content-specific pedagogy, they are able to make adjustments to instruction that benefits all students through improved instruction. (Endicott survey, self-study, teachers, professional development documents)

Commendations

1. NMHS teachers' use of CLT to collaborate in order to collect, analyze, and assess student performance data in order to identify and respond to inequities in student learning and to make adjustments to instructional practices
2. New Milford High School's commitment to a formal teacher observation protocol which emphasizes the importance of teacher reflection and instructional growth
3. The TEAM mentor program which fosters increased collaboration between beginning and experienced teachers regarding best instructional practices

4. The many engaging instructional practices that teachers have developed to personalize learning for students
5. The implementation of technology as an instructional tool demonstrated in the practical arts and engineering classrooms
6. NMHS teachers' use of instructional strategies that provide students with opportunities to learn inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking skills and allow students to take ownership of their learning
7. The availability of NMHS teachers outside of school hours to assist students with individual needs
8. The many collaborative learning activities that teachers provide across subject area departments
9. NMHS teachers who strategically differentiate instruction to meet student needs
10. Teachers' use of formative assessments to adjust instructional practices to meet the individual needs of students
11. Teachers' use of feedback to improve instructional practices

Recommendations

1. Provide training for teachers on the integration of the school's core values, beliefs, 21st century expectations, and the school-wide rubrics into instructional planning and modifications
2. Continue integrating the core values and beliefs into activities and discussions provided by the advisory program
3. Ensure that teachers include purposefully organized group learning activities in their instruction across the curriculum
4. Provide training for all professional staff on integrating technology into instruction
5. Create more formal and informal cross-disciplinary learning opportunities
6. Provide all teachers with training on differentiated instruction and alternative teaching strategies to address individual student needs
7. Ensure that teachers receive further training on the analysis and interpretation of student performance data for use during CLT sessions

8. Organize structured professional development that supports teachers' review and practice of instructional techniques provided through current educational research
9. Establish a system of accountability of reporting within the structured CLT time
10. Increase opportunities through instructional practices for students to use self-assessment and reflection concerning their work

Teaching and Learning Standard

4

Assessment of and for Student Learning

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

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

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

ASSESSMENT

Conclusions

The professional staff employs a formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations on a limited basis. Because a small group of teachers is piloting the school-wide rubrics to assess the school's newly adopted 21st century learning expectations, not all students are familiar with them nor do they have a sense of how they are progressing in achievement of the school-wide learning expectations. Currently, NMHS has no formal process to assess or report individual student achievement or whole-school progress in meeting the expectations. After the four school-wide rubrics were presented to the school community in the fall of 2014, 16 teachers volunteered to pilot the rubrics and provide feedback so the rubrics may eventually be implemented on a larger scale. At present, the adopted learning expectations do not drive improvements in curriculum, instruction, or assessment. During the student panel presentation only one of five students reported that their teachers assessed them by using the school-wide problem-solving rubric which is being piloted in math, business, and engineering. Several world language and English teachers are individually using the communication rubric and several social studies teachers are using the technology rubric. Individual sociology and advisory teachers are using the social and civic rubrics to assess student progress. Many students report being assessed by rubrics; however, further discussion reveals that they are actually referring to common department rubrics that are based on the Common Core State Standards. Full implementation of a formal process to use school-wide rubrics to assess 21st century learning expectations will ensure that every student will be regularly assessed and will provide whole-school data to determine whole-school and individual progress in meeting the 21st century expectations. (teacher interviews, students, administrator interviews, self-study)

New Milford High School has formally adopted the 21st century learning expectations but does not yet communicate individual or school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to students and their families or the community. Individual teachers include the school's 21st century learning expectations into many assigned projects, and the new parent portal has the potential for communicating student grades to the parents; however, no formal plan is in place to initiate this process. Administrators and teachers are aware of the need to assess and report student achievement on the 21st century learning expectations. There is a plan to begin the use of the four school-wide rubrics in the 2015-16 school year. In order to ensure that all teachers support the use of these rubrics, all staff members have been given the opportunity to provide feedback on the original documents, and the 16 teachers piloting the use of these rubrics are providing feedback about their experiences with these rubrics through a shared Google Document. When NMHS implements a formal process for communicating individual and whole-school progress on the identified 21st century learning expectations,

students, parents, and the school community will have a better understanding about progress in achieving the learning expectations and the school will be able to determine its success. (teacher interviews, instructional leaders, self-study)

New Milford High School's professional staff continuously collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement. With implementation of common learning time (CLT) and in conjunction with the state's System for Education Evaluation and Development (SEED), teachers collect and measure data to determine strategies for instruction, levels of growth, and methods for remediation. Some of the data collected include Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), rubrics from the Common Core for Teaching (CCT) that align with lesson plans, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) scores to inform differentiation of instruction, Indicators of Academic Growth and Development (IAGD), with baseline trends, examples of Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI), and both Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) data to plan for identified achievement gaps. To address the needs of teachers and students, the district recently hired a full-time data coach to collaborate with teachers on the collection, analysis, and disaggregation of data. Also, in response to a review of student performance data, the district has created and filled positions for math and English interventionists. NMHS teachers use common learning time to collect data for many purposes, including to identify and to respond to inequities in student achievement. Some CLT groups routinely make changes in their instructional practices, redesign their assessments, and create or alter common assessments to address identified inequities and achievement gaps. Several CLT groups brainstorm better strategies for meeting the student needs and analyze inequities they discover in their research and data collection. For example, a science teacher discovered a gender inequity while examining student results on a national assessment and researched this inequity to see if a cause could be determined. Five science teachers collaborated to identify ways to make science education more welcoming and equitable for female students. Math, English, history, world languages, and science teachers regularly use CLT time to discuss assessment results and student work. The varied assessments used provide these teachers with an accurate picture of student achievement and the data collected is useful in changing instructional practices to meet all students' needs. Not all instructors teaching a specific course are able to have CLT time with colleagues and may not be involved in the redesign of instruction or have an opportunity to give feedback based on their experiences with student assessments. The continued use of common learning time by teachers to collect, disaggregate, and analyze data in order to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement and to improve assessment practices benefits all students in the high school. (teachers, students, self-study)

Some NMHS teachers communicate the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific goals to students. Of the students responding to the Endicott survey, 61

percent agrees that teachers routinely communicate 21st century learning expectations and the corresponding unit-specific learning goals that will be assessed. Forty-six percent of teachers agrees that prior to each unit of study, they communicate to students the unit's learning expectations and corresponding rubrics to be used. The implementation of a common practice of communicating the learning outcomes and 21st century learning expectations to students at the beginning of each unit will clarify how the student will be assessed. (teacher interviews, students, Endicott survey, self-study)

Prior to summative assessments, many NMHS teachers provide students with the corresponding rubrics to assess student learning. Students report that teachers often give them the rubrics used for the course at the beginning of the year. Additionally, in the Endicott survey, 78 percent of students reports that they know in advance what their teachers' expectations are, and 76 percent agrees that they understand the rubric that will be used to assess their work. Some teachers also require students to self-assess on formative and summative assessments using checklists or teacher-developed rubrics. Providing all students with the rubric that will be used to assess their learning on each unit of study improves student learning and supports achievement of the 21st century learning expectations. (teacher interviews, students, Endicott survey, student work)

Many NMHS teachers employ a range of assessment strategies in each unit of study including formative and summative assessments. Teachers frequently tailor the assessment to the specific skill. For example, students give oral presentations, write narratives, program robots, and create products or portfolios to demonstrate what they have learned in the unit of study. Students report many interesting formative and summative assessments in their classes. Teachers use common formative and summative assessments in the vast majority of science and math courses. Teachers in the practical arts, social studies, English, and health/physical education classes use assessments similar in format and drawn from the same curriculum, while some teachers have created common assessments. It is common practice for teachers to review student performance data from common formative assessments, midterm/final exams, and department benchmarks which are designed to assess student mastery of course curriculum and to monitor how well instruction is aligned with the curriculum. Many teachers also instruct students in assessing their own work and anticipating areas they will need to focus on prior to the summative assessment of a unit. Employing a range of assessment strategies allows NMHS students to demonstrate their ability and knowledge in a variety of ways and provides rich information for teachers. (teacher interviews, students, course assessments, self-study)

Most teachers collaborate regularly in formal ways to create, analyze, and revise formative and summative assessments, including common assessments, and some teachers collaborate regularly in informal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments,

including common assessments. Teachers meet regularly each week during common learning time (CLT) to collaborate in formal ways on the creation and revision of formative and summative assessments including common assessments. The Endicott survey indicates that 80 percent of the staff reports that they meet formally to discuss and improve both formative and summative assessment strategies. The CLT groups showcase some of the formative data, student work, and instructional strategies so that teachers outside the CLT groups may view techniques and results. Informal collaboration also takes place. For example, the world languages department uses Google Docs to share formative and summative assessments with teachers who are teaching a specific class but are not part of the CLT group working on the assessment. Science teachers use a common drive to share information informally. The special education teachers who co-teach classes with regular education teachers do not have formal time to collaborate in the creation and revision of formative and summative assessments but they are provided with coverage when they request time to collaborate. Although most teachers have formal time to collaborate regularly on the creation, analysis, and revision of formal and summative assessments, including common assessments, the inclusion of all teachers using formal rather than informal time, will ultimately benefit teachers and students. (teacher interviews, self-study, Endicott survey)

Most NMHS teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work. The Endicott survey indicates that approximately 62 percent of students surveyed agrees that their teachers assess or correct their school work in a reasonable amount of time, offer suggestions to help them improve their school work, and that their teachers' grading is fair and consistent. In addition, 70.2 percent of the parents surveyed states that teachers provide timely and corrective feedback to assist their children in revising and improving assignments. Examples of formative assessments and discussions with students indicate that teachers use formative assessment practices to monitor and assess students' work, in the short term, and provide students with the opportunity to revise/resubmit their work before it is formally assessed. For example, math and science teachers provide specific feedback on formative assessments and then allow the students to make modifications. English and social studies teachers provide corrective feedback and then allow students to revise their work. Students and teachers report that formative corrections are provided within one week to ten days after taking the formative and prior to the summative. Because students receive consistent, substantive, timely and corrective feedback, they better understand how to improve their work and performance. (self-study, teacher interviews, student shadowing, student work)

Most teachers regularly use formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning. Teachers regularly use formative assessments to modify their instructional practices. For example, most teachers use verbal questioning and in-class written practices such as journal entries or exit tickets as formative assessment tools. During

CLT, teachers communicate their students' progress using formative assessments and adapt their instructional practices for the purposes of improving student learning. Teachers' use of formative assessments to inform and adapt instruction helps improve student learning and ultimately their achievement of the 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, student shadowing, teacher interviews)

New Milford High School teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instruction including analyzing student work, common course and grade-level assessments, standardized assessments, data from sending schools, and survey data from current students. Teachers evaluate student work during common learning time in order to revise curriculum and modify pacing. In addition, teachers analyze student work to improve individual and departmental instructional practice. Teachers in numerous departments develop common course and grade-level assessments to improve standardization, instruction, and to ensure grading equity. Individual teachers use common formative assessments to ensure all students have adequately learned the material and to revise the pacing of the curriculum if needed. The math, science, world languages, and engineering departments have collaboratively created formative and summative assessments during their professional development time. All the departments share some formative assessments and are working to create common summative assessments to improve standardization and instructional strategies and to revise curriculum. Some departments have created common assessments which have improved instruction and provided input for revising curriculum timing. Assessment of both individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations is minimal at this time, but some progress is being made by the 16 teachers who are piloting the four school-wide rubrics. Their feedback from use of these rubrics is being shared with other professionals using a Google Doc. How the NMHS teachers will use the rubrics and how the information derived from their use will impact teaching and learning remains to be determined. When NMHS fully implements use of the school-wide rubrics it will be able to assess and report the progress of individual students and whole-school progress in achieving the school's expectations for student learning. Standardized assessments such as Advanced Placement (AP), CAPT, Project Lead the Way, Force Concept Inventory, and Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) are used by NMHS professionals to determine and modify curricula. Data from sending schools have been interpreted with the help of a district-wide data specialist. The MAP assessments are used to determine achievement gaps. Steps to remedy the gaps are implemented with the help of the new math and English intervention specialists. Collaborative examination of standardized assessment data allows the school to make evidence-based decisions to revise curriculum and improve instructional practices. Survey data from current students indicate that 80 percent agrees that their teachers use a variety of methods to assess their learning, and 70 percent of the staff agrees that they examine a wide range of assessments to revise and improve curriculum and instructional practices. Currently,

New Milford High School does not survey recent graduates or alumni to obtain opinions about programs and services that prepare students for post-high school careers or future education. Although NMHS educators examine a range of evidence for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instruction including student work, common course and grade-level assessments, standardized assessments, and data from sending schools, and are able to make informed decisions concerning curriculum revision and instructional improvements. When NMHS is able to assess school-wide and individual student progress in achieving the 21st century learning expectations, instructional practice will enhance student achievement. (self-study, teacher interviews, student work, students, Endicott survey)

New Milford High School has informally reviewed and revised grading practices, but has not yet fully ensured alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning, and it has not determined a method for reporting student progress in meeting the student expectations for learning. The Endicott survey indicates that 54.2 percent of the teachers agrees or strongly agrees that the school regularly reviews and revises school-wide grading and reporting practices but the school has not fully linked grading practices to the NMHS core values and beliefs. grading practices are aligned with the Common Core State Standards, which include the values embodied in the Work, Achieve, Value, and Empower (WAVE) acronym, thereby indirectly linking the core values to grading. Furthermore, in the last two years, NMHS formally reviewed its grading and reporting practices, but because the reviews occurred prior to the adoption of the school's core values and beliefs, the connection between core values and beliefs and grading is not explicit or intentional. Since the review of the grading practices, NMHS recently adopted Teacher Plus, a program that communicates a student's progress to students and parents in a timely manner. Teacher Plus enables students and parents to monitor student progress via a web portal, which supports the school's efforts to integrate core values in its grading practices and policies. During common learning time and departmental professional development time, teachers ensure that their grading is based on the content standards, which reflect the same values as the NMHS core values. Although indirect, this process supports efforts to keep teachers' grading and reporting practices aligned with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. (teacher interviews, Endicott survey, parents, students, self-study)

Commendations

1. The teachers who have volunteered to pilot the new rubrics and provide feedback to the rest of the professional staff during the 2014-2015 school year
2. Teachers' collaborative use of CLT to examine, revise, and improve assessments
3. Teachers' use of CLT in several departments to examine student performance data to identify and address inequities
4. The creative and meaningful authentic assessments created by many NMHS teachers

5. The efforts of teachers to share the results of their collaboration during CLT sessions through the end of year showcase
6. The support NMHS teachers provide by giving students rubrics which correspond to summative assessments
7. The world languages department's use of Google Docs as an informal means of communicating ideas about assessment
8. NMHS teachers' use of common formative assessments to inform and adapt their instructional practices in order to improve student learning
9. The teachers' provision of specific, timely, and corrective feedback to students about their work so that students may revise and improve their work
10. The collaboration of NMHS teachers to create, analyze, and revise formative and summative assessments, including common assessments
11. The use of MAP and other standardized testing data, supported by the data specialist, to assist in determining strategies to address identified achievement gaps
12. The incorporation of a digital student management system (parent portal) to communicate with students and parents about student achievement

Recommendations

1. Develop and implement a formal process based on the school-wide rubrics to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations
2. Ensure that all teachers implement the use of school-wide rubrics to determine student progress in meeting the 21st century expectations
3. Develop and implement the process for reporting to all students, their families, and the school community the school's progress in meeting the learning expectations
4. Ensure that prior to each unit of instruction teachers communicate the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations
5. Ensure that all teachers provide students with corresponding rubrics prior to summative assessments

6. Provide training for all teachers that enables them to use CLT sessions to analyze student performance data and to create or revise assessments to meet students' needs, especially authentic assessments
7. Support and develop collaboration methods to assist teachers who are not part of CLT groups to receive the important information from CLT groups that relate to courses they teach or co-teach
8. Survey NMHS alumni using a graduate follow-up process to determine how effectively the school prepares student for post-secondary careers, continuing education in colleges or technical schools, or service in the military
9. Ensure that all departments create and use common assessments to support consistency in instruction and assessment
10. Implement a formal process for the review and revision of the grading and reporting practices at NMHS to ensure alignment with the core values and beliefs about learning
11. Create a process for reporting to students and their families individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century expectations
12. Provide more training on Use the Teacher Plus grading system so that it is used to its maximum benefit

SUPPORT STANDARDS

SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

5

School Culture and Leadership

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

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

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

SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Conclusions

New Milford High School (NMHS) consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all. The halls of NMHS are festooned with student work and photographs celebrating learning and involvement of the student body. To ensure safety and a positive climate, security officers greet students at the main entrance, all doors lock once someone exits or enters, and any students who leave the building must re-enter through the main entrance. Of the students who responded to the Endicott survey, 72.7 percent reports “they feel safe at school.” NMHS effectively builds a positive learning environment through the work of the school climate committee that meets monthly, and the school has an effective behavior management system for most students; however, this program does not reach the needs of every student. NMHS builds a respectful culture through a number of programs such as True Colors and the Anti-Defamation League’s Names program. Students and faculty members participate in a number of charity events such as Teens for Jeans, Star project, and the holiday food drive. When surveyed, 63.4 percent of students reports that “teachers respect students,” but only 33.9 percent of students reports that students respect one another. Both teachers and students agree, in the school climate survey, that more work needs to be done to improve student to student and student to teacher respect. As reported in the self-study, an in school suspension program has been successful in improving student behavior for all but a small segment of the school population. Many staff members and school leaders have expressed an interest in development of a program for the most at-risk students. The superintendent and board of education members support the school’s efforts to provide appropriate programs and services for all students and everyone in the school community is aware that the school has begun research into alternative programs. Ninety-seven percent of the student population participates in clubs that meet during activity days and a large percentage is involved in extracurricular activities including interscholastic athletics, academic honor societies, the performing arts, and media clubs. In addition, 64.2 percent of students agrees that “teachers at my school are concerned about my learning.” NMHS students and faculty members cultivate a spirit of mutual respect. Their efforts create a safe, positive, respectful, supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all. (classroom observations, self-study, student shadowing, panel presentation, students, parents, Endicott survey)

The school is equitable, and inclusive, ensuring access to challenging academic experiences for all students, making certain that courses throughout the curriculum are populated with students reflecting the diversity of the student body, fostering heterogeneity, and supporting student achievement of the school’s 21st century learning expectations. All students at NMHS, with the

exception of Advanced Placement (AP) American Government students, are required to pass a heterogeneously grouped class in civics or Modern America to meet the civics graduation requirement. Ninety-nine percent of graduating seniors from the class of 2014 is enrolled in more than one heterogeneously grouped class. All NMHS students also are required to pass a heterogeneously grouped health class. The Endicott survey indicates that 78.1 percent of students has a number of opportunities to take courses in which students of varying levels are enrolled including courses in English, social studies, math, and science. Many junior and senior electives in English, science, and social studies are heterogeneously organized. The classes that are heterogeneously grouped are richly diverse, encompassing students of all ability levels and needs. Because NMHS offers many opportunities for students to take at least one heterogeneously grouped course, the school is equitable, inclusive, and fosters heterogeneity. (self-study, Endicott survey, parents, students)

New Milford High School provides a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and often assists the student in achieving the 21st learning expectations. The advisory program meets for a 25-minute block of time every other day. Each member of the professional staff, with the exception of school counselors, is assigned to an advisory group of randomly selected students grouped by grade. Each advisory group is scheduled to meet with the same faculty member for four years. The purpose of the program is to personalize each student's educational experience. At the beginning of each year, the advisory staff member receives a program binder that contains suggested grade-appropriate activities for use with advisory students. The activities are designed to support the development of various 21st century learning expectations. For example, students engage in various discussions related to issues such as cyber bullying to foster civic and social responsibility. Advisory teachers ask students to set short- and long-term goals and to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in various aspects of their lives as NMHS students. While many students, staff, and parents believe that this program is valuable, not all advisory teachers follow the provided activities with fidelity. Since NMHS has instituted the advisory program, every student has a connection to an adult, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and offers support. However, because the activities of the advisory program are inconsistently implemented, the advisory program has not yet reached its full potential of assisting all students in achieving the 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, student shadowing, panel presentation, teacher interviews, students, department leaders, school board, Endicott survey)

The principal and professional staff of NMHS collectively engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning, extensively use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices, regularly dedicate formal time to implement professional development, and in some instances apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in

order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Through common learning time (CLT) groups, the professional staff collaboratively designs common assessments, compares results of assessments, develops course-specific student learning objectives (SLOs) and indicators of academic growth and development (IAGD), and makes data-driven decisions about instruction and assessments. Each CLT group also shares its work on data collection boards that are displayed at the end of the year during a gallery walk exercise created by school leaders. Teachers indicate that CLT time, which is 84 minutes once or twice a week during the school day, is adequate for collaborative work. The faculty has numerous opportunities to use resources outside the district to pursue professional development. For example, professional staff attended various presentations by Jonathan Costa through Education Connection, a regional educational resource center; special education department specialist consultants, such as board certified behavior analysts (BCBAs), on bullying prevention programs; and speakers from the Conference on Learning Theory (COLT) for language teachers, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and Connecticut business center conferences, and many others. There is substantial time throughout the school year to accommodate professional development needs. In addition to the CLT time, the district schedules two full-day professional development seminars at the beginning of the school year and six half days and an additional full day during the year. There is a formal professional development planning team that consists of district leaders and teachers from every level. Although the self-study report and teachers interviewed value the CLT time, only 35.3 percent of teachers who responded to the Endicott survey reports that professional development program enables them to acquire new skills to improve instruction and assessment. While there is a significant number of teachers who participate in professional development outside NMHS, it is not clear how widely the skills and information gained from this professional learning are shared formally with the rest of the staff.. Teachers also are able to collaborate with their peers during departmental and faculty meetings throughout the year. NMHS provides highly valuable professional learning time through the CLT schedule which allows staff to engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning, and to discuss teachers' experiences in implementing new approaches to improve teaching, learning, and assessment of student performance on the school's 21st century learning skills. (self-study, panel presentation, teacher interviews, department leaders, school board, Endicott survey)

NMHS leaders use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improving student learning. NMHS has fully adopted the System for Educator Evaluation and Development program (SEED) as required by the state of Connecticut. All teachers and evaluators are provided with training for the successful implementation of this program. In the SEED model, each evaluator observes and meets with each assigned teacher three times a year. The system has two components. The first focuses on student growth and development as demonstrated through standardized and non-standardized measures, including Student Learning

Objectives (SLOs) and Academic Growth and Development (IAGD). The second component requires teachers to demonstrate proficiency in teaching practices through observations. Of the staff surveyed in the Endicott survey, 77.5 percent reports that evaluators play an important role in improving instructional practices. As a result of the school leadership adopting and successfully implementing the SEED evaluation system, teachers are able to improve their instructional practices and student learning based on timely, research-based feedback. (self-study, panel presentations, teacher interviews, school leadership, Endicott survey)

The organization of time supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students. Members of the school community invested much time and effort in reviewing various scheduling options. After discussions and review, the school adopted a block schedule that allows regular education teachers to meet with their CLT colleagues every four days for 84 minutes to allow for professional collaboration. The block schedule also allows for a sustained silent reading period (3TR) every other day as well as an advisory period on the opposite days. This schedule can also be adjusted for other purposes such as bi-monthly activity periods. Each class meets for 81-84 minutes every other day. The extended time allows for more comprehensive instruction, as well as authentic, problem-solving activities and assessments. However, the science department has noted that their time with students has been decreased by this schedule. Carefully designed after extensive research, New Milford High School's, block schedule supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration, and the learning needs of all students. (classroom observations, self-study, student shadowing, panel presentation, teacher interviews, school board, school leadership team)

At NMHS, student loads and class sizes enable most teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students. The average class size is 13.77. In classes required for graduation, the average class size is 21 students. Of students surveyed, 76.7 percent agrees that class sizes in their courses are reasonable. In comparison, only 55.8 percent of faculty members agrees that student load and class size enable them to meet the learning needs of individual students, while 59.5 percent of parents agrees that that the number of students in their children's classrooms allows the teachers to meet the children's individual learning needs. However, there are some inconsistencies in section sizes that create inequities in courses requiring several sections. In the 2013-2014 academic year the average class size was 20, and the average teacher load was 98.8 students. There are a few classes with ten students and some with more than 30 students. The student load and class sizes at NMHS enable teachers to meet the needs of individual students. (Endicott survey, panel presentation, parents, teacher interviews, student shadowing, school board)

The principal, working with other building leaders, consistently provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The administrative staff is comprised of six positions: the principal, three assistant principals, the athletic director, and the special education supervisor. While the principal is responsible for the overall school program, each member of the administrative team is responsible for specific departments and areas of the school. In addition to providing instructional leadership, the principal is active in professional development planning and often shares valuable educational resources with the staff through email and workshops. Sixty-three percent of students surveyed agrees that the principal is clear in what he wants the school to accomplish for all students. Also, 66.4 percent of the professional staff reports that the principal and other school-based administrators provide instructional leadership that is consistent with the school's core values, beliefs and learning expectations. The principal uses a variety of communication methods to reinforce core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. Because the principal at NMHS consistently provides instructional leadership rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations, teaching practice is enhanced and student learning is increased. (Endicott survey, teacher interviews, self-study, panel presentation, students)

NMHS teachers have several opportunities to become involved in meaningful and defined ways in decision-making that promotes responsibility and ownership. However, the degree of involvement in decision-making of parents and students is more limited. Teachers have several avenues for communicating with school leaders about decisions regarding student learning. Through the school climate committee, which consists of students, teachers, parents and school leaders, stakeholders have opportunities to express their views in regard to decision-making. In addition, through the faculty senate, teachers provide input to the committee about the needs, ideas, and concerns of the entire school staff. Teachers also have involvement in decision-making through participation in hiring committees and scheduling committees. The New Milford Board of Education has a non-voting student representative who brings a student's perspective to discussions about programs and policies. The NMHS student council also provides students with opportunities for input in school decision-making. Parents may offer input through the parent-teacher organization (PTO) and many are involved with various support or booster groups focused on specific teams or activities. Fifty-five percent of parents surveyed reports that they have opportunities to be involved in important decisions made at the school, while only 51.7 percent of faculty members report that teachers, students, and parents are meaningfully involved in decision-making to promote an atmosphere of responsibility and ownership. While some NMHS stakeholders are meaningfully involved in the decision-making processes resulting in responsibility and ownership promoted throughout the school, increased communications about how each group is currently represented and what opportunities are available for those seeking input will benefit the school. (panel presentation, self-study, teacher interviews, school leadership team, Endicott survey)

Teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. Teachers have opportunities in areas such as curriculum writing, professional development, and department leadership that allow them to assume leadership roles within NMHS. A group of NMHS teachers initiated the Names program, which provides activities that raise consciousness, awareness, and sensitivity about differences among members of the school community. A health teacher initiated an anti-drug program in conjunction with the New Milford Youth Agency that involves the community in raising funds for speakers and events. There are other programs that are teacher initiated and directed as well as a faculty senate that brings forth suggestions for the principal to aide in decision-making. The structure of the curriculum revision process gives teachers the opportunity to exert leadership in ways that directly increase student engagement and learning. Teachers may initiate professional development opportunities through the professional development and growth committee, however, more faculty need to be aware of these opportunities. NMHS has several team mentors through the teacher education and mentoring program (TEAM), which gives teachers opportunities to exercise leadership in supporting beginning teachers. There is teacher involvement in leadership that results in overall improvement of the school. (self-study, panel presentation, school board, school leadership team, teacher interviews)

The school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. The school board and superintendent work closely together on policy, regulations, and stewardship of the school district; and the superintendent and the principal are collaborative and reflective in their practice in applying the school's core values and beliefs. Time is allowed in the leadership schedule for the administrative team to meet on a monthly basis. The agenda for these meetings is developed by all stakeholders so input from each level is ensured. According to the Endicott survey, approximately half of the professional staff reports that the school board, superintendent, and principal collaborate in the process of achieving learning expectations. Much of the collaborative work is generated by the superintendent and the principal through the budget approval process. In addition, the board sponsors a student/staff recognition day that is coordinated by building leadership. A board of education curriculum committee (committee on learning) that reviews the five-year curriculum plan also meets once a month and reviews input from the high school principal on matters involving curriculum. Requests for curriculum changes, including new course proposals, are submitted through written proposals. The committee on learning votes to approve or reject the changes without any direct presentation or discussion from the principal. The superintendent and principal of NMHS are collaborative, reflective, and constructive, resulting in student progress toward meeting the school's 21st century learning expectations being increased and supported. (Endicott survey, school board, self-study, school leadership team)

The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school. Fifty percent of the professional staff and 80.1 percent of the parents agree with the statement that “the school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient authority to lead the school.” The principal is responsible for developing the budget of the school, and the budget process becomes a vehicle used to discuss many decisions about NMHS. The principal also makes planning and procedural decisions with input from the administrative and leadership teams from NMHS. NMHS has recently received funding for the English and math interventionists and has been supported with sufficient staff despite a decline in enrollment. The principal’s responsibilities are also outlined in the school’s “Administrative Responsibilities Chart” which indicates that the principal is responsible for school decisions concerning such needs as developing the master schedule, building the school budget, and supervising staff among many other responsibilities. Consequently, because the principal is granted sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school, students’ achievement of the 21st century learning expectations is enhanced. (Endicott survey, school board, superintendent, teacher interviews)

Commendations

1. The safe, positive, and supportive culture of NMHS that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all
2. The programs developed to build a culture of respect and provide for open discussions concerning differences among the members of the school community
3. The school’s fostering of heterogeneity through the civic class requirement and offering of many elective courses that enroll students across all levels
4. The advisory program that connects each student with an adult other than a guidance counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school’s expectations for learning
5. The provision of CLT sessions that help teachers collaborate to improve student learning through review of best practices
6. The successful implementation of the SEED teacher evaluation process that helps all teachers improve instruction practices based on timely, research-based feedback from evaluators
7. The efforts of the leadership of NMHS to provide teachers and students with manageable class sizes and student loads
8. The instructional leadership provided by the school principal and leadership team

9. The decision-making authority provided by the school board and superintendent to enable the principal to lead the school

Recommendations

1. Develop practices, programs, and/or procedures to address the issue of student-to-student respect
2. Ensure that all students have equal access to achieving the learning expectations through consistency in implementing the advisory program activities
3. Ensure that the opportunities for parent and student involvement in decision-making are communicated regularly through the many communication channels available to the school

6 School Resources for Learning

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

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

21st century learning expectations.

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

SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Conclusions

The school has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for most students including identified and at-risk students that support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. In response to the Endicott survey 72.9 percent of NMHS staff responded that the school has timely, coordinated, and direct intervention strategies for all students, including special education, 504, and at-risk students, that support each student's achievement of the school's learning expectations. However, English language learners (ELL) may not be receiving coordinated and directive services intervention strategies because there is only one ELL instructor who has limited time to collaborate and provide suggestions for intervention strategies with regular classroom teachers. Teachers and administrators report that there are some NMHS students who have not benefited from interventions in place for disengaged students. Despite the efforts of the school climate committee, counseling support, an activity period offered during the school day that allows for clubs and activities requested by students, and the advisory program, school staff is aware of and able to identify a small number of students who do not engage in the life of the school. Each student at NMHS is assigned to a school counselor. School counselors deliver their department's curriculum through the advisory program and meet with each counselee at least once per year for regular and ongoing post-secondary counseling. NMHS uses an inclusion model of instruction. NMHS provides approximately 18 co-taught courses wherein, a general education teacher works with a special education teacher to design and deliver instruction. There are 18 paraprofessionals in the special education department who support students in both core and elective courses. The special education department provides a number of programs to support student learning, including adequate support for eligible service recipients through the use of Planning and Placement Teams (PPTs), yearly information briefings for regular education teachers regarding modifications and accommodations for students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs), and programs for students in need of additional support. NMHS offers a behavior intervention program that serves students with emotional behavior disorders, learning disabilities, and students identified as autistic. The behavior intervention program provides students with direct instruction and individualized coursework in a small setting using a program called Odysseyware. NMHS also offers a life skills program for students with disabilities. These life skills courses address the core subject areas and provide students with practice learning skills they will need to be successful in life beyond high school. The Independent Living Skills program offers students with disabilities assistance in practical daily tasks, such as laundry, cooking, and socialization. To help students with disabilities make a smooth transition from high school to post-secondary life, NMHS offers services for special needs students who have completed high school through the Litchfield Transition Center which provides a transition teacher and job coaches among other services. Through the PPT process NMHS and the transition center support students who have completed the credit requirements for graduation but

are not yet ready to transition into the workforce. The resulting program provides a curriculum for the Independent Living Skills course. NMHS has a Unified Sports program, which allows students with disabilities to participate in athletics with their peers. Through the Unified Buddies program, which meets during activity days, NMHS provides student volunteers to support the Unified Sports program and disabled students. Paraprofessionals are also available after school to support the Unified Sports program. The visiting committee found that there was careful planning for special needs students, collaboration between regular and special education teachers, and effective responses from school administrators when faculty requested assistance. Still faculty members expressed their concern that NMHS has not been successful in meeting the needs of students who are seen as disengaged and they would appreciate more resources to help them address the needs of English language learners. Administrators, social workers, and guidance staff work together to identify at-risk students based on attendance and behavioral data, and social emotional issues. The administrative team is currently examining school-within-a-school alternative programs by visiting successful programs in the state. The Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) program has no formalized process, and NMHS is in the process of revising the SRBI process to better support at-risk students. This year, one math and one English interventionist teacher positions were created. However, these teachers each split their time between providing intervention and teaching SAT prep courses. At present, there are almost 70 students who have been identified as needing intervention services, but only 40 receive services. Currently, there are no formal entry or exit procedures for intervention courses. NMHS has one ELL teacher who also works with ELL students in other district schools. The ELL teacher collaborates with general education teachers to support students but has limited time to ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. While the ELL teacher is able to support the students in their progress toward achieving the learning expectations, many regular classroom teachers feel that some students are struggling in their courses and both teachers and students would benefit with greater support. As a result of coordinated efforts between special education services, teachers, and the guidance department, NMHS has timely and directive intervention strategies for students with special needs, department which helps them achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. However, coordinated, timely, and direct intervention strategies for all students, including at-risk and ELL students, will ensure these students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (support services staff, student shadowing, teacher interviews, parents, self-study)

The school frequently provides information to families, especially to the most in need, about available support services. According to the Endicott survey, 84.3 percent of students agrees that they know who to ask for help if they have a personal problem at school. Staff (68.3 percent) agrees that NMHS provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available support services. Each year, NMHS hosts events for incoming freshmen to help them acclimate to the high school. School counselors, the health services staff, and the special

education staff communicate regularly with parents regarding individual issues that arise throughout the course of the year. The NMHS counseling department publishes a monthly newsletter called the *Guidance Grapevine*, which informs parents of upcoming college events, summer enrichment programs, scholarship information, ACT and SAT test dates, a list of seniors who have been admitted into college, the college they were admitted to, and scholarships students have been awarded. This publication is emailed to families each month. The guidance department uses portions of the online program Naviance with students throughout high school. Naviance helps the counseling department create student success plans and track student interests. Naviance is also used to help students and families progress through the college and career planning process. The counseling department hosts a financial aid night and senior parent night. This year the counseling department also hosted a college fair, which was attended by 90 schools and organizations. The counseling department communicates with families and students via Twitter. The main Twitter account is managed by the head counselor and has 180 followers and 200 tweets to date. Three other counselors have individual Twitter accounts as well. The principal communicates with families through the *Principal's Corner* newsletter each month, which is emailed to families along with updates from the social work department. The guidance department keeps track of families that do not have access to a computer at home and works to ensure that hard copies of these newsletters and other electronic communications are sent home. In addition, important communication is translated for Spanish speaking families. Administrators are also active on Twitter. Accounts are used to communicate updates about school events, celebrate accomplishments, and provide followers with other pertinent information. NMHS hosts assemblies and programs about current issues affecting families, such as decision-making, bullying, and substance abuse. Thanks to a grant, NMHS was able to create a district resource directory in 2007-2008. This directory lists resources support services for disabilities, child abuse hotlines, emergency assistance services, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) services, resources for pregnant women, recreation resources, and vocational services. These directories are available in the guidance office on an as-needed basis. As a result of the administrators, school counselors, and support services staff using print, digital, and personal communication, most families are made aware of available student support services, especially the families most in need. (self-study, panel presentation, teacher interviews, students, school support staff, Endicott survey)

Support service staff frequently use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student. The guidance department and support staff use Naviance to help deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student. Counselors use the Naviance Family Connections program to communicate information to parents and students about upcoming events, college planning, and SAT and ACT testing. Naviance allows students to register for college visits in the career center and request letters of recommendation and transcripts. In coordination with the advisory program, students use Naviance to perform college

searches and compare their SAT and ACT scores, and grade point averages with students who have been admitted to the schools they are considering. The career center administrative assistant and counselors use Naviance to send transcripts and letters of recommendation electronically. Naviance also allows counselors to collect data and track student progress on college applications, acceptances, and other post-high school plans. Student Success Plans (SSPs), career searches, and personality profiles are stored in Naviance. Counselors, school psychologists, social workers, and special education case managers use IEP Direct to house and manage Individual Education Programs (IEPs) for all special education students, including student goals, accommodations, and modifications. These plans are also housed on a shared drive on the school's server. Administrator Plus is used to monitor attendance, discipline data, and student grades. Support services professionals also provide assistive technology to ensure an effective range of coordinated services for each student. A laptop with a touch screen was provided for a student who had surgery and couldn't write; six iPads can be checked out to assist non-verbal students on an as-needed basis. Visually impaired students receive audio versions of texts when available and may also use reading devices to enlarge print. A limited number of Spanish e-books are available for ELL students who speak Spanish although no other languages are currently supported through with this technology. The use of technology has allowed student support staff to deliver an effective range of services to most students, thereby better enabling them to meet 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, panel presentation, school support staff)

New Milford High School's counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who deliver a written, developmental program, meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling, engage in individual and group meetings with all students, and deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers. The school counseling department uses ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community (for example seniors are surveyed about guidance services through Naviance) to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. Six counselors at New Milford High School serve 1,378 students resulting in a student-to-counselor ratio of 235:1. In addition to the counseling staff, NMHS has two school psychologists, one full-time and one part-time; three social workers, two full-time, one part-time; one part-time social coach, who assists students in the development of social skills; and one volunteer mentor supporting students. School counselors meet individually with each of their counselees at least once a year and frequently meet with students for additional time depending on the individual's needs. According to the Endicott survey, 28.9 percent of students agrees that they meet with school counselor regularly. Furthermore, 73.4 percent of students reports feeling comfortable going to a school counselor. According to the parent response to the Endicott survey, 95 percent of parents responds favorably when asked if they feel guidance and counseling services are available for

their children if needed. School counselors spend a majority of their time working with students on course selection, post-high school planning, special education services, and responsive services/crisis intervention. School social workers and school psychologists collaborate with school counselors to address the personal needs of individual students. Counselors' ability to meet with students individually and in small groups is affected by other duties including lunch monitoring and supervising Take Time to Read (3TR) sessions. In addition, counselors are unable to work with students in groups when students are scheduled for class; consequently, advisory is the only time available to deliver group lessons. Therefore, some counselors may take three to four weeks to address all assigned groups. Still, the advisory program provides time for school counselors to meet with students to address topics imperative to the Developmental School Counseling Curriculum and Student Success Plans. Aspects of the Developmental School Counseling Curriculum include the transition to high school, self-awareness, goal setting, junior planning, and the college application process. In addition, school counselors also hold senior workshops with students every other day to address pressing questions about the college application/transition process. All school counselors are regularly involved in delivering collaborative outreach and referral to community and mental health agencies, and social service providers. School social workers collaborate with local agencies to provide students and families with community resources. Information regarding community resources is also available through a 2007-2008 resource directory. In addition, information regarding upcoming school events, college planning, and educational opportunities is distributed via the *Guidance Grapevine*, the school counseling monthly newsletter, and a social work column in the principal's newsletter. The school counseling department retrieves data from the Naviance program and PSAT scores. These data are analyzed and used to identify students in need of additional support and prompted an increase in individual meetings between 12th grade students and school counselors to address post-secondary planning and graduation rates. While the current school counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel to provide all students with comprehensive services delivered through individual and small groups; in some instances, the duty schedule may limit the time counselors have to meet with students. NMHS counselors provide a range of services to students despite the challenges of time and a variety of responsibilities. (self-study, students, parents, school support staff)

The school's health services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who provide preventative health services and direct intervention services, use an appropriate referral process, conduct ongoing student health assessments, and informally uses ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. The New Milford High School health suite is staffed by two full-time registered nurses (RNs) and one full-time nurse paraprofessional to serve the 1,378 students. One of the RNs also serves as the nurse coordinator for the district and occasionally attends meetings outside the building

during the school day. According to the Endicott survey, 81.7 percent of staff agrees that the school has sufficient certified/licensed health services personnel. The nursing staff provides preventative health services and direct intervention services. The health suite is large enough to provide space to treat students and to ensure privacy for personalized student care. On a daily basis, the health services staff provides triage and management of student injuries and illnesses in the health suite as needed. According to the Endicott survey, 78.0 percent of students agrees that they feel comfortable going to the school nurse. The nurse's office provides staff with yearly in-service training on blood borne pathogens, signs and symptoms of food allergies, and epinephrine (EpiPen) administration. In addition, the health services staff is also responsible for writing individualized health plans that reflect applicable federal and state laws and regulations, and professional standards of practice. These individualized health plans are written for students with health needs. Plans are then given to appropriate staff members, transportation personnel, and extracurricular personnel. Additional copies are also provided for teacher substitute folders. Defibrillators are located in each wing of the school and an Emergency Response Team is available to support the health professionals. This team is made up of staff certified in the automated external defibrillator (AED) /cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid training that is provided as needed by the nurse coordinator to ensure certifications are kept up to date. The nurse coordinator is also responsible for participating in Crisis Response Team Planning and running an Emergency Response Team drill each year to ensure all students are provided with effective health services. The health services staff uses an appropriate referral process and collaborates with other professionals to ensure that students receive appropriate services. The nursing staff maintains compliance with state and federal mandates concerning immunizations and physical exams; however, the staff no longer provides physical exams to students. Instead, the health services staff refers students to primary care physicians and other area health providers, including providing resources to at-risk students through the Samaritan Health Center in Danbury, which provides free services to underserved and uninsured children in the area. When appropriate, the health services staff also makes referrals to the school counseling department, social workers, psychologists, and other mental health and support services. Available health services information is also posted on the New Milford Public Schools website and is available in hard copies in the health suite. The health services staff at NMHS conducts ongoing health assessments and informally uses assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. The health services staff tracks student health needs using SNAP health care, a secure, password protected database. This program enables the health services staff to run reports for data collection, including tracking immunizations, physical exams, visits to the nurse's office, and medication administration. Hard copies of student health records that include all student health information are maintained using state mandated cumulative health record requirements. These data are collected for state and district reports, and are shared with parents upon request. Using these data, the health services staff informally reflects on the year and modifies services to ensure all students are able to meet the school's 21st

century learning expectations. The health services staff is currently exploring new ways to decrease the amount of lost instructional time due to frequent nurse visits. As a result of having an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff, an appropriate referral process, and the appropriate use of ongoing student health assessments and relevant assessment data, the school's health services department is able to support students in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, health services staff, Endicott survey, facility tour)

Library media services are integrated into curriculum and instructional practices in some areas and certified/licensed personnel and support staff are actively engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum, provide a wide range of materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum, ensure that the facility is available and staffed for students and teachers before, during, and after school, are responding to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning, conduct ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations; however, there are not an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff to meet the needs of all students effectively. According to the Endicott survey, 64.2 percent of the professional staff agrees that NMHS has sufficient certified/license library media services personnel and support staff, and 64.5 percent of students agrees that the NMHS school library is available to them before, during, and after school hours. The library media center (LMC) is open daily from 7:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Teachers and students may request access to the LMC using an online Google form available on the school's website. After school, between the hours of 2:00 p.m. – 7:00 a.m. students may request a pass to the library for the following school day on the Google form. The LMC is staffed by one full-time, certified library media specialist (LMS) and one full-time library clerk. NMHS currently averages a ratio of 1,378 students-to-one certified media specialist and the ratio of students-to-media center staff is 756:1. This ratio is far greater than the District Reference Group (DRG) D data provided by the state which groups communities into reference groups based on similarities in demographics such as average income and levels of education among citizens. DRG D data indicate that the averages a ratio of 956 students for every one certified media specialist and a ratio of 461 students for every media staff member. The high ratio of students to the library media specialist limits the ability of the LMS to collaborate with teachers. Furthermore, the LMS cannot leave the library clerk alone on duty due to contractual specifications, which inhibits the LMS's ability to be fully engaged in the development and implementation of the school's curriculum. While the current LMS has made strides toward improving the involvement of the LMC in implementing the school curriculum, the LMS has only been in this position for one year, making it difficult to establish continuity and consistency in how the LMC is able to support the school curriculum. Fifty-eight percent of staff agrees that library/information services personnel are actively engaged in the development and implementation of the school's curriculum, while 24.4 percent is undecided. According to

student responses to the Endicott survey, 60.9 percent of students agrees that the LMC has the resources students need, and 29.4 percent of students are undecided. Staff (74.2 percent) agrees that the NMHS library media center provides them with a wide range of materials, technology, and other information services. While teachers and students agree that the LMC does have an appropriate number of resources, students and teachers do not agree on how often the LMC is used for class. Fifty percent of staff agrees that the LMC is used for assignments and research in their class. However, only 18 percent of students agrees that they use the library often for class. Recent changes in LMC staffing have improved student and teacher access to the LMC resources, and the new LMS is eager to provide support to all students, however, more efforts should be made to resolve any issues that are limiting class visits to the LMC. The library currently houses approximately 12,500 volumes, but the average age of the collection is 23 years, and fewer than 500 print titles have been purchased in the last five years. Eighty-six percent of the age-sensitive portion of the nonfiction collection is out-of-date. Despite challenges, over 300 digital titles have been purchased for circulation. The LMC is currently equipped with 16 desktop computers for student use, a 26-station computer lab, a Chromebook cart, and a classroom with a computer and SMART Board. However, many of the computers are slow and run out-of-date programs, which cause compatibility issues and difficulties accessing materials. The LMC also has several iPads, three iPod Touches, and a Nook available for teacher or student use, although many students are unaware that these devices are available for checkout. Furthermore, many of these items are currently used to support students with special needs. The LMS also provides students access to a wide number of databases and online search engines for research. Web 2.0 tools such as EasyBib and TurnItIn are available, but not managed by the LMC. The LMS is working with staff and students to identify what texts and resources would improve the collections, particularly what texts are necessary to support implementation of Common Core State Standards and to meet student interests. To support this effort, departments are asked to submit “wish lists” of materials they would like for classes. Library personnel conduct few assessments using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school’s 21st century learning expectations. Each time the library media specialist administers instruction, she conducts formative assessments before and after classroom instruction to evaluate students understanding of concepts central to information literacy. As a result of more coordinated efforts from the LMS, the library has continued to improve its collection and resources. Providing a wide range of up-to-date resources and integrating library media services into the curriculum will ensure each student achieves the school’s 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, library media staff, Endicott survey, facility tour, students, teacher interviews)

The majority of support services for identified students, including special education and Section 504 of the ADA have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to

achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations, provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students, and perform ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning opportunities; however, support services for English language learners are limited. New Milford High School has 11 full-time certified special education teachers as well as a half-time special education teacher. There are also two part-time speech and language pathologists, 18 paraprofessionals, and two student care workers who have been hired through Education Connection to give one-to-one support to students with significant special needs. A staff member from the Institute of Professional Practice (IPP) also works with one student with significant needs. NMHS faculty and staff provide services to approximately 170 students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Special education students receive services determined by their individual needs as outlined in their IEPs. The services provided by special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and student care workers include: individualized direct academic support for students' IEP goals, collaboration with regular education teachers, communication with parents, community outreach, and referral programs, co-taught courses in English, math, social studies, and science, and transition planning. NMHS has one teacher for English language learners (ELL) who is working with approximately 10 to 15 of the 22 identified ELL students for the 2014-2015 school year. The ELL teacher assesses students' skills informally and formally to guide services. The ELL teacher works with students during scheduled blocks and during students' study halls, if needed. The ELL teacher is also responsible for coordinating ELL students' needs within other district schools. The NMHS school counseling department is responsible for monitoring 86 students with 504 plans. Counselors are responsible for communicating accommodations with parents and teachers, as well as monitoring student progress, and making adaptations as necessary. Special education teachers, the ELL teacher, and school counselors report that regular communication among students, parents, and regular education teachers helps to assure coordination and support to students in need. Seventy-four percent of staff agrees that support services personnel collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff to achieve the school's learning expectations. The special education team holds annual Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings for identified special education students to discuss student progress in academic courses and progress toward individual IEP goals. Special education teachers regularly communicate and collaborate with teachers in co-taught and regular education courses. The ELL teacher communicates with parents through formal documents such as the bilingual survey sheet, service letter, and exit letter. In addition, the ELL teacher provides a book written in Spanish to bilingual parents entitled *How to Help Your Children Be Successful in School*. Professional staff members make efforts to communicate with Spanish speaking parents; there are 19 other languages reported as spoken by students and families in NMHS and it is unclear whether parents and student from homes where English is not the dominant language are able to access all the programs and services of NMHS effectively. School counselors use many communication strategies to communicate with parents and teachers to address student needs. In addition, the

health services department collaborates with faculty members to plan and coordinate accommodations. For example, if a student with a 504 plan needs to have an EpiPen available at all times the school nurse is available to train faculty members in its appropriate use. The NMHS student support services staff makes efforts to ensure that the collaboration and coordination of services for identified special education students addresses all their needs effectively. However, due to scheduling limitations, only limited coordination and collaboration of services is possible in the ELL department, which hinders the ability of some ELL students to achieve NMHS's 21st century learning expectations. New Milford High School provides a variety of inclusive learning opportunities that are available to all students, including those identified as special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners. Students with plans under Section 504 or with IEPs have access to a learning strategies class for additional academic or organizational support provided by a special education teacher, paraprofessional, and two tutors. Community-based learning opportunities for students are also provided within several self-contained independent living skills classes that focus on daily living activities. NMHS also offers two multi-sensory reading classes as well as a multisensory English class. In addition, life skills and advanced life skills courses are available in math and English. Students also have the opportunity to gain authentic work experience through the community-based work exploratory programs that are coordinated between the special education department and cooperating businesses in the area. Co-taught classes taught by regular education and special education teachers are available in math, science, social studies, and English. In addition to the classes offered, NMHS also provides for inclusive extracurricular activities, including a Unified Buddies program that pairs a student with disabilities with a peer in an inclusive sports program to participate in soccer, bowling competitions, and track. The effectiveness of these programs is evidenced by academic grades monitored by faculty. As a result of collaborative and comprehensive support services for identified students, there are inclusive services available to allow students to achieve the 21st century learning expectations. Teachers and support staff may access the results of ongoing assessments using relevant data through IEP direct, Administrators' Plus portal, LAS Links (ELL), and Northwest Evaluation Assessment (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) report data. In addition, teachers conduct informal assessments daily in classes to check for understanding. The data and feedback gained through these avenues is used to guide and improve services to ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. A district data coach hired for the 2014-2015 school year and has assisted in organizing student data and tracking grades of students in the math and English intervention programs. Teachers reported that the intervention program could gather further information and analyze data to better guide delivery of services in upcoming years. Ongoing assessments using relevant data, including feedback from NMHS's community, improve services and ensure that most students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations; however, support services staff must further analyze data of the students participating in the intervention programs to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, teachers, parents, school support staff)

Commendations

1. New Milford's inclusion model that enables students with identified learning needs opportunities to work with a range of students in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
2. The use of the advisory program to provide every NMHS student with the guidance curriculum
3. The progress being made in the library resource center in providing services that support student attainment of the school's learning expectations
4. The wide range of special education services to support student attainment of the 21st century learning expectations
5. The Unified Sports and Unified Buddies programs that ensure that all students have the opportunity to participate in all aspects of school life
6. The access that students receive to a wide array of outside services through the efforts of the health and school counseling professionals
7. The addition of two interventionists to address the needs of students identified as in need of interventions in order to help them achieve the school's 21st century expectations
8. The school's counseling staff's effective use of technology such as Naviance to track student success plans and assist students with post-secondary planning
9. The school's effective use of digital resources such as Twitter and email to communicate with families and gather feedback
10. The creation of the district data coach position that provides teachers with training in analysis of student performance data to inform instructional decisions

Recommendations

1. Update both the technological resources and the print collection in the library media center in order to support the learning needs of all students
2. Provide appropriate support, programs, and services for students identified as in need of greater interventions
3. Create a formal process for entry and exit into intervention programs and a formal process for tracking data of students in intervention programs

4. Formalize the SRBI program to better meet the needs of students who are not sufficiently engaged in the life of the school
5. Address the staffing needs in the library media center to ensure that all classes as well as individual students have sufficient support in achieving the school's learning expectations
6. Provide common planning time opportunities for regular and special education teachers who co-teach classes to collaborate
7. Develop a formal evaluation system that will enable the school counseling, library media, and health services departments to receive feedback from parents, students and teachers about their programs and use that information to improve services and communications
8. Increase whole-class use of the LMC to better support the curriculum



Community Resources for Learning

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

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

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Conclusions

The community of New Milford and the New Milford Board of Education provide dependable funding for a wide range of school programs and services, sufficient professional and support staff, ongoing professional development and curriculum revision, a full range of technology support, and sufficient equipment and instructional materials and supplies. Recent budget increases of 2.13 percent and 4.57 percent have allowed additional staffing in science and additional student support through two intervention specialists. The school receives adequate funding for supplies in elective areas, and while the budget supports purchases of new textbooks and supplies in mathematics and English as required by new Common Core State Standards aligned curricula, some print materials are in need of replacement, and textbook budget lines in some departments have not always been funded. Teachers and administrators report that, in recent years, funds for professional development have increased to address the demands of curriculum revision and the State's new teacher evaluation plan. Although some teachers believe that there was a lack of sufficient reimbursement funds creating a deterrent to teachers who wish to attend more costly professional development activities and conferences, the self-study reports that all curriculum revisions were fully funded and no professional development requests were declined because of funding. Spending for technology has also increased in the past few budgets, yet the accelerated rate of technological advancement and the increasing integration of technology in all classrooms present funding challenges for the community and district. Administrators, teachers, parents, and students mention the need to accelerate the pace of computer replacement and new hardware purchases. The five-year technology plan accounts for such expenditures, and it also addresses the necessary upgrades to network infrastructure to support additional workstations. The plan provides estimated expenditures for computers beyond 2016. Developments such as Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) Testing and other unforeseeable demands may require changes or additions to the plan. When meaningful dialogue between school stakeholders and the board of education is sustained, the needs of New Milford High School's students will be clarified and the necessity of adequate funding to support the technology, equipment, and supplies required for all students to achieve 21st century learning expectations can be communicated. (facility tour, school board, Endicott survey)

The school effectively develops, plans, and funds programs to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant, to properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment, and to keep the school clean on a daily basis. The building is clean and comfortable, resulting in a hospitable environment. There is a clear and systematic method for addressing maintenance requests through the school's maintenance management software, SchoolDude, and the cleanliness and condition of the school affirm the effectiveness of this system. Preventative

maintenance and long-term capital improvement plans ensure sustained upkeep of the facility, and the principal meets regularly with maintenance staff to execute and adjust the existing plans and to prepare for future needs. An adequate number of maintenance and grounds-keeping staff manage the facility and maintain a modern, computer-managed infrastructure that ensures a comfortable, temperate environment. The recent addition of natural gas as a fuel option allows for improved economy in energy purchases and anticipates possible fluctuations in the energy marketplace. On the campus as a whole, the considerable student involvement in athletics strains the capacity of the playing fields, and considerable wear and tear is evident on playing surfaces that were installed when the building opened. The restoration of the gymnasium floor, the plans to resurface the tennis courts this summer, and the exploration of synthetic field surfaces represent effective management of the campus and testify to the sustained communication between the building administrators and the maintenance staff as they consider new materials and technologies that might improve the physical plant. Because of careful planning the maintenance and custodial staff are able to keep the building and grounds clean safe, and functioning. The condition of the campus reflects culture of thoughtful planning and funding that exemplifies the community's interest in maintaining a high school that is a centerpiece for the town and a symbol of civic pride. (facility tour, school leadership team, school support staff)

The community funds and the school implements long-range plans that address programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements. Building administrators communicate with facilities management staff to plan for upcoming improvements to the physical plant, and the town's capital improvement plan indicates these upgrades. Teachers discuss curricular needs with their departmental leaders, who share these suggestions with building administrators, who, in turn, share them at the district level. The five-year curriculum plan reflects these discussions and informs budgetary decisions. The board of education has secured funding to address an identified need at the high school for assistance with at-risk students. The educational technology plan, developed through the district Technology Planning Committee and in accordance with the state's educational technology plan template, includes five goal areas, each with an action plan. However, at the time of the visit, there was little evidence that these action plans are being executed. Some recent discoveries regarding infrastructure deficiencies have presented challenges to the successful implementation of some aspects of the action plan. The technology capital request indicates a number of suggested improvements to the network infrastructure, as well as recommended hardware purchases, all of which amount to a slight increase from last year's approved budget, but a 44 percent decrease from the funding level of 2011-2012, and a 22 percent decrease from the funding level of 2012-2013. The five-year technology plan proposes funding at an average of \$231,884 for the next five years, which is in line with this year's request. The New Milford community clearly values its high school facility as well as the diversity of the programs and services it offers to students. To continue to meet student needs NMHS will require sufficient

funding to ensure adequate access to technology for all learners. (facility tour, school board, budget documents, self-study)

Faculty and building administrators are actively involved in the development of the building budget, however the development of long-term plans would benefit from involvement of a broad range of stakeholders. Teachers communicate their materials and supplies needs to their department leaders, who develop budgets and rationales for presentation to building administrators and central office staff. The budget process involves a negotiation among the building principal, the superintendent, the board of education, and the Town Council to balance school requests with economic realities. These groups solicit feedback from parents and community members at public hearings and in other forums. Involving all stakeholders in the identification of technology needs and budget priorities will ensure a collaborative decision about how to meet these needs in light of economic concerns. (teacher interviews, self-study, school board)

The school site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services. The 15-year-old facility accommodates all academic programming, and recent decreases in student enrollment allow for comfortable use of the building. Storage facilities are provided in numerous locations around the athletic complex to address the need for local equipment storage, and the building itself adequately houses a range of programs, including science labs that meet Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and educational standards, spacious technical education areas with proper ventilation and safety controls, art rooms with sufficient storage and equipment (a kiln), a language lab, a digital design computer lab, and a video production lab. The nurse's office has adequate space for ill students, as well as sufficient storage space and room for record storage. The media center is large enough to support student demand during study halls, although this space is beginning to experience more extensive use by students and staff. The theater is large enough to support half of the student population at once, and its technical appointments permit professional-quality performances by both school and community groups. The fitness room and weight room allow for a range of fitness instruction, and the athletic campus adequately supports a host of varsity and sub-varsity sports, although the fields exhibit signs of overuse because of the high demand from various teams and organizations.. The heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system (HVAC) and the electrical systems provide a temperate environment that is conducive to learning, although reports of failed circuits in the engineering program suggest that the school should investigate the implications of more demanding technology on the electrical systems. The security cameras provide a limited view of the exterior of campus, but adequate coverage of the interior. Locks, access management cards, and security systems ensure a safe and secure campus. Moreover, the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy and omnipresence of smart phones suggests an increased need for charging stations to support a greater density of workstations around the campus. The

school strives to support the delivery of high quality school programs and services through its school site and plant. As the community continues to develop long-range plans to inform budgetary priorities, it will better support students in attaining the 21st century learning expectations. (facility tour, teacher interviews, students)

The school maintains documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. All documentation is easily accessible through the principal's office or through the facilities maintenance office. Staff maintains, upgrades, and replaces equipment on a regular basis, and food service and environmental equipment is inspected as required by local or state agencies. The school replaces classroom equipment as necessary, and the MMS system maintains an ongoing record of maintenance requests, response time, repair status, and aggregate maintenance logs. Department leaders maintain inventories of classroom equipment and textbooks, and facilities management and technology maintain inventories of the equipment that they are responsible for maintaining. Consequently, the school's careful attention to meeting all applicable federal and state laws and compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations for equipment and facilities ensures a safe, clean, and comfortable learning environment that contributes to a culture of professionalism and achievement. (self-study, school support staff, facility tour)

There are a number of ways the professional staff actively engages parents and families as partners in each student's education, although the staff must increase the efforts to involve those families who have been less connected with the school. The school offers informational meetings, a parent portal, a Twitter feed, a monthly newsletter, and the school's website as methods of informing parents about events and programs at the school. Parents feel that the school and district make efforts to inform and involve them in their students' education, and they serve as chaperones for school trips, act as "band parents," and work through organizations such as Motivational Volunteers Promoting the Spirit of Sports (MVP-SOS) and the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) to become involved in the life of the school. Teachers call home as a common first response to a struggling or disengaged student, and while they affirm the usefulness of the parent portal as a way to communicate about student performance, they express concern about its limited use by parents. School administrators have been monitoring the level of parent use of the portal to check on student attendance and assignments in each course and have determined that they must do more to familiarize parents with the portal to increase its use. The new teacher evaluation plan requires faculty to develop a parent outreach goal, which will augment the five parent-teacher sessions offered to parents. Email and teacher websites are other options for communicating with parents, and electronic signs in front of and around the interior of the school communicate important announcements. Survey results and parent interviews support the claim that parents feel connected to the school, although it is difficult to know if

those least connected families participated in the survey. Parent response to surveys and vehicles for feedback about the school and their concerns has been uneven. The school's interest in developing an alternative program suggests that there is still work to be done to reach all families, but programs such as the classes for parents of first-generation college students and Parent University, offered through the New Milford Youth Agency, represent efforts to provide instruction and support for struggling parents or for parents of at-risk students. While the school has effective means of communicating with the majority of parents, developing outreach programs to involve all parents in the life of the school will help engage families as partners in each student's education. (teacher interviews, self-study, parents)

New Milford High School has developed a variety of productive community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning. Opportunities abound for students to learn beyond the classroom walls through partnerships with local organizations such as the Animal Welfare Society, the New Milford Youth Agency, local emergency response teams, the public library, the police department, and the Village Center for the Arts. Internship opportunities through local businesses and organizations are available for course credit, and the special education department facilitates career explorations through its curriculum and Individualized Education Program (IEP) transition recommendations. Students may participate in the larger New Milford school community through the Children's Literature and Early Childhood Education courses, both of which allow high school students to interact with younger learners, as well as the Cut, Paste, and Copy program, which creates projects for individuals and groups throughout the town. Additionally, the school works with area businesses to involve professionals in transition and mentorship programs such as Project Lead the Way, and area businesses provide financial support for school programs such as the planetarium and Motivational Volunteers Promoting the Spirit of Sports (MVP-SOS). Community organizations such as the Kiwanis, Rotary, and Lions Clubs all have affiliated clubs at the high school that encourage students to become involved in volunteerism. The high school partners with the University of New Haven to provide college credit for Project Lead the Way, and although greatly diminished due to changes at the college level, the partnership with Naugatuck Valley Community College continues to allow students some opportunities to earn college credit during their high school careers. The school also offers a range of Advanced Placement courses that offer students college credit. Parents note a number of opportunities to become involved in the life of the school through booster clubs for athletics and band, but they frequently mentioned the Parent Teacher Organization at the high school is far less involved than at the elementary level. New Milford High School is integrated in the community through many partnerships, and through nurturing these ties and developing new ones that reflect their 21st century learning expectations it will further support student learning. (self-study, teachers, parents)

Commendations

1. The New Milford community's and board of education's sustained support for a wide range of school programs and services at New Milford High School
2. The provision of sufficient professional and support staff, equipment, and instructional materials and supplies to meet the demands of new curricula
3. The school facility that is clean, well-maintained, and energy efficient
4. The set of maintenance protocols that ensures timely, effective repairs
5. The long-range plan that incorporates both infrastructure and aesthetic improvements to the school facility to support a positive and professional learning environment
6. The faithful execution of long-range capital improvement plans by building administrators and maintenance staff to improve the efficiency of the physical plant, allowing the community to focus its resources on instructional priorities
7. The well-defined and organized budget process that allows for the participation of all faculty members and administrators in making decisions about instructional supplies and facilities needs
8. The school facility that provides spaces that are large and equipped to accommodate a diverse range of course offerings and programs
9. The many community, business, and higher education partnerships that provide students with opportunities to expand their learning beyond the walls of the school

Recommendations

1. Provide the resources to enable faculty members to receive reimbursement for professional development activities and conferences outside the district
2. Ensure adequate and dependable funding for a full range of technology support so that teachers and students may have reliable, on-demand access to technology across the curriculum
3. Conduct an audit of the school's digital network infrastructure in order to inform the educational technology plan and ensure an appropriate allocation of resources for reliable and adequate access to technology
4. Provide adequate resources for campus improvements that address the high demand for athletic facilities, especially the needs for sufficient, well-maintained fields

5. Increase opportunities for all stakeholders to provide input into the process used to develop long-range plans that dictate budget lines and future purchases that impact the learning environment
6. Enhance communication from all staff members to parents of all ELL students whose dominant language is not English
7. Analyze district and school data to identify students in need of intervention who are not finding success in the programs and services offered, and develop outreach programs to families that are not active in the school

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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

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

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

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

The visiting committee thanks everyone in the New Milford High school community for their hospitality during our visit and for the efforts they made to help us learn about all the programs, practices, and services that make NMHS a positive place for learning and growth.

APPENDIX A

**New Milford High School
NEASC Accreditation Visit
May 3-6, 2015**

Visiting Committee

<p>Elaine Bessette, Chair Retired Principal Bloomfield, CT 06002</p> <p>Barbara Fecteau, Assistant Chair Beverly High School Beverly MA 01915</p> <p>Ian Strever Housatonic Valley Regional High School Falls Village, CT 06031</p> <p>Thomas Mueller RHAM High School Hebron, CT 06248</p> <p>Jessica Cardillo Ridgefield High School Ridgefield, CT 06877</p> <p>Jodiann Tenney Plymouth Public Schools Terryville, CT 06786</p> <p>Rachel Liscinsky Ansonia High School Ansonia, CT 06401</p> <p>Alysse Hoagland Rockville High School Vernon, CT 06066</p>	<p>Stacie Kaye Bethel High School Bethel, CT 06801</p> <p>Sally de Gozzaldi Avon High School Avon, CT 06001</p> <p>Gena Spiller Naugatuck High School Naugatuck, CT 06770</p> <p>Keith Berthiaume Simsbury High School Simsbury, CT 06070</p> <p>Gary Franklin Newtown High School Sandy Hook, CT 06482</p> <p>Gerald O'Connell Newington High School Newington, CT 06111</p> <p>Peter Silva Amity Regional High School Woodbridge, CT 06525</p>
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NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

Committee on Public Secondary Schools

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

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

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

Summary of Commendations and Recommendations

COMMENDATIONS

Core Values and Beliefs

1. The creation of the WAVE acronym that enables all members of the school community to recognize and understand the school's core values and beliefs about student learning
2. The many activities and programs that New Milford High School offers to students that reflect and reinforce the core values and beliefs about learning

Curriculum

1. The embedding of the school's communication, problem solving, and technology expectations into curricula revised since 2011
2. The inclusion of comprehensive units of study using Understanding by Design in curriculum since 2011
3. The inclusion of a variety of authentic learning opportunities for students in Project Lead the Way, Cut, Copy-Paste, and Med Tech
4. The efforts of teachers to align assessment and instruction with the written curriculum through their work during CLT time
5. The self-study committee's development and use of a rubric to assess the alignment of the curriculum with NEASC indicators for curriculum
6. The alignment between the written and taught curriculum which is supported through formal and informal procedures related to the teacher evaluation program
7. The review of student performance data and instructional practices during CLT time to determine the success of curriculum implementation and assessment
8. The guidance provided to teachers in the district-wide curriculum handbook and the five year curriculum plan
9. The level of staffing, instructional materials, supplies, and facilities that support the implementation of the curriculum
10. The efforts of the NMHS teachers to clarify for students the appropriate and ethical use of technology through classroom discussion and posting of technology expectations
11. The efforts of the library/media specialist to support curriculum implementation

12. The creation of new positions to support both intervention efforts and SAT preparation in both math and English

Instruction

1. New Milford High School teachers' use of CLT to collaborate in order to collect, analyze, and assess student performance data in order to identify and respond to inequities in student learning and make adjustments to instructional practices
2. New Milford High School's commitment to a formal teacher observation protocol which emphasizes the importance of teacher reflection and instructional growth
3. The TEAM mentor program which fosters increased collaboration between beginning and experienced teachers regarding best instructional practices
4. The many engaging instructional practices that teachers have developed to personalize learning for students
5. The implementation of technology as an instructional tool demonstrated in the practical arts and engineering classrooms
6. NMHS teachers' use of instructional strategies that provide students with opportunities to learn inquiry, problem-solving and higher order thinking skills that allow students to take ownership of their learning
7. The availability of NMHS teachers outside of school hours to assist students with individual needs
8. The many collaborative learning activities that teachers provide across subject area departments
9. NMHS teachers who strategically differentiate instruction to meet student needs
10. Teachers' use of formative assessments to adjust their instructional practices to meet the individual needs of their students
11. Teacher use of feedback to improve instructional practices

Assessment

1. The teachers who have volunteered to pilot the new rubrics and provide feedback to the rest of the professional staff during the 2014-2015 school year
2. Teachers' collaborative use of CLT to examine, revise, and improve assessments
3. Teachers' use of CLT in several departments to examine student performance data to identify and address inequities
4. The creative and meaningful authentic assessments created by many NMHS teachers
5. The efforts of teachers to share the results of their collaboration during CLT sessions through the end of year showcase

6. The support NMHS teachers provide by giving students rubrics which correspond to summative assessments
7. The world Language department's use of Google Docs as an informal means of communicating ideas about assessment
8. NMHS teachers' use of common formative assessments to inform and adapt their instructional practices in order to improve student learning
9. The teachers' provision of specific, timely, and corrective feedback to students about their work so that students may revise and improve their work
10. The collaboration of NMHS teachers to create, analyze, and revise formative and summative assessments, including common assessments
11. The use of MAPS and other standardized testing data, supported by the data specialist, to assist in determining strategies to address identified achievement gaps
12. The incorporation of a digital student management system (parent portal) to communicate with students and parents about student achievement

School Culture and Leadership

1. The safe, positive, and supportive culture of NMHS that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all.
2. The programs developed by the school to build a culture of respect and provide for open discussions concerning differences among the members of the school community
3. The school's fostering of heterogeneity through the civic class requirement and offering of many elective courses that enroll students from across all levels
4. The advisory program that connects each student with an adult other than a guidance counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's expectations for learning
5. The provision of CLT sessions that help teachers collaborate to improve student learning through review of best practices
6. The successful implementation of the SEED teacher evaluation process that helps all teachers improve instruction practices based on timely, research-based feedback from evaluators
7. The efforts of the leadership of NMHS to provide teachers and students with manageable class sizes and student loads
8. The instructional leadership provided by the school principal and his leadership team
9. The decision-making authority provided by the school board and superintendent to enable the principal to lead the school

School Resources for Learning

1. New Milford's inclusion model that enables students with identified learning needs opportunities to work with a range of students in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
2. The use of the advisory program to provide every NMHS student with the guidance curriculum
3. The progress being made in the library resource center in providing services that support student attainment of the school's learning expectations
4. The wide range of special education services to support student attainment of the 21st century learning expectations
5. The Unified Sports and Unified Buddies programs that ensure that all students have the opportunity to participate in all aspects of school life
6. The access that students receive to a wide array of outside services through the efforts of the health and school counseling professionals
7. The addition of two interventionists to address the needs of students identified as in need of interventions in order to help them achieve the school's 21st century expectations
8. The schools counseling staff's effective use of technology such as Naviance to track student success plans and assist students with post secondary planning
9. The school's effective use of digital resources such as Twitter and email to communicate with families and gather feedback
10. The creation of the district data coach position that provides teachers with training in analysis of student performance data to inform instructional decisions

Community Resources for Learning

1. The New Milford Community's and board of education's sustained support for a wide range of school programs and services at New Milford High School
2. The Provision of sufficient professional and support staff, equipment, and instructional materials and supplies to meet the demands of new curricula
3. A school facility that is clean, well-maintained, and energy efficient
4. A set of maintenance protocols that ensures timely, effective repairs
5. The long-range plan that incorporates both infrastructure and aesthetic improvements to the school facility to support a positive and professional learning environment

6. The faithful execution of long-range Capital Improvement plans by building administrators and maintenance staff to improve the efficiency of the physical plant, allowing the community to focus its resources on instructional priorities
7. The well-defined and organized budget process that allows for the participation of all faculty members and administrators in making decisions about instructional supplies and facilities needs
8. The school facility that provides spaces that are large and equipped to accommodate a diverse range of course offerings and programs
9. The many community, business, and higher education partnerships that provide students with opportunities to expand their learning beyond the walls of the school

RECOMMENDATIONS

Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

1. Develop and implement a plan to ensure that the review and revision of the core values about learning and the 21st century learning expectations is a collaborative and inclusive process that employs multiple data sources and aggregate results of the school-wide achievement of the learning expectations
2. Complete the review/pilot process of the school-wide analytic rubrics and implement the use of the 21st century learning expectations in all classes to ensure every student has the opportunity to meet all the school's learning expectations
3. Determine and publish the targeted high level of achievement for each analytic school-wide rubric

Curriculum

1. Create a district and/or school-wide curriculum committee comprised of teachers and administrators to organize and support on-going curriculum revision, vertical articulation and curriculum evaluation
2. Incorporate higher order thinking skills and the school's 21st century learning expectations into all curricula
3. Include current research-based practices and resources into all curriculum documents
4. Ensure that all curriculum documents include both instructional strategies and assessment practices that include use of the school-wide rubrics and course specific rubrics
5. Ensure that all curricula emphasize depth of understanding and application of knowledge
6. Incorporate standards and lessons concerning the informed and ethical use of technology into all content area curricula
7. Evaluate and revise out-dated curriculum using the NEASC-aligned curriculum evaluation rubric used by the self-study committee

8. Conduct a technology audit that investigates the adequacy of technology equipment, software, and programs to support implementation of the curriculum across all subject areas and address identified needs in a timely manner
9. Address issues connected to the use of CLT to revise curriculum

Instruction

1. Provide training for teachers on the integration of the school's core values and beliefs, 21st century expectations and the school-wide rubrics into instructional planning and modifications
2. Continue integrating the core values and beliefs into activities and discussions provided by the advisory program
3. Ensure that teachers include purposefully organized group learning activities in their instruction
4. Provide training for all professional staff on integrating technology into instruction
5. Create more formal and informal cross-disciplinary learning opportunities
6. Provide all teachers with training on differentiation of instruction and alternative teaching strategies to address individual student needs
7. Provide time for collaboration for co-teachers
8. Ensure that teachers receive further training on the analysis and interpretation of student performance data for use during CLT sessions
9. Organize structured professional development that supports teachers' review and practice of instructional techniques provided through current educational research
10. Establish a system of accountability of reporting within the structured CLT time
11. Increase opportunities through instructional practices for students to use self-assessment and reflection concerning their work

Assessment

1. Develop and implement a formal process based on the school wide rubrics to assess whole school and individual student progress in achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations
2. Ensure that all teachers implement the use of school wide rubrics to determine student progress in meeting the 21st century expectations
3. Develop and implement the process for reporting to all students, their families, and the school community the school's progress in meeting the learning expectations
4. Ensure that prior to each unit of instruction teachers communicate the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations

5. Ensure that all teachers provide students with corresponding rubrics prior to summative assessments
6. Provide training for all teachers that enables them to use CLT sessions to analyze student performance data and create or revise assessments to meet students needs, especially authentic assessments
7. Support and develop collaboration methods to assist teachers who are not part of CLT groups to receive the important information from CLT groups that relate to courses they teach or co-teach.
8. Survey NMHS alumni using a graduate follow up process to determine how effectively the school prepares student for post secondary careers, continuing education in colleges or technical schools or service in the military
9. Ensure that all departments create and use common formative and summative assessments to support consistency in instruction and assessment
10. Implement a formal process for the review and revision of the grading and reporting practices at NMHS to ensure alignment with the core values and beliefs about learning
11. Create a process for reporting to students and their families each student's progress in achieving the school's 21st century expectations and demonstrating the core values and beliefs
12. Provide more training on the Teacher Plus grading system so that it is used to maximum benefit.

School Culture and Leadership

1. Develop practices, programs, and/or procedures to address the issue of student-to-student respect
2. Ensure that all students have equal access to achieving the learning expectations through consistency in implementing the advisory groups program activities
3. Ensure that the opportunities for parent and student involvement in decision-making are communicated regularly through the many communication channels available to the school

School Resources for Learning

1. Update both the technological resources and the print collection in the Library/Media Center in order to support the learning needs of all students
2. Provide appropriate support, programs, and services for students identified as in need of greater interventions
3. Create a formal process for entry and exit into intervention programs and a formal process for tracking data of students in intervention programs
4. Formalize the SRBI program to better meet the needs of students who are not sufficiently engaged in the life of the school

5. Address the staffing needs in the library media center to ensure that all classes as well as individual students have sufficient support in achieving the school's learning expectations
6. Provide common planning time opportunities for regular and special education teachers who co-teach classes to collaborate
7. Develop a formal evaluation system that will enable the school counseling, library media, and health services departments to receive feedback from parents, students and teachers about their programs and use that information to improve services and communications
8. Increase whole class use of the LMC to better support the curriculum

Community Resources for Learning

1. Provide the resources to enable faculty members to receive reimbursement for professional development activities and conferences outside the district
2. Ensure adequate and dependable funding for a full range of technology support so that teachers and students may have reliable, on-demand access to technology across the curriculum
3. Conduct an audit of the school's digital network infrastructure in order to inform the educational technology plan and ensure an appropriate allocation of resources for reliable and adequate access to technology
4. Initiate a study of the physical plant and develop a plan to address the impact of future technology purchases on the electrical infrastructure
5. Provide adequate resources for campus improvements that address the high demand for athletic facilities, especially the needs for sufficient, well-maintained fields
6. Increase opportunities for all stakeholders to provide input into the process used to develop long-range plans that dictate budget lines and future purchases that impact the learning environment
7. Enhance communication from all staff members to parents of all ELL students whose dominant language is not English
8. Analyze district and school data to identify students in need of intervention who are not finding success in the programs and services offered, and develop outreach programs to families that are not active in the school