

**New England Association of  
Schools and Colleges**



**Committee on Public Secondary Schools**

**Report of the Visiting Committee for  
Westport High School**

**Westport, Massachusetts  
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# **STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS**

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

The Committee on Public Secondary Schools (CPSS) of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) considers this visiting committee report of Westport 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 (60) days 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 Westport High School in terms of the CPSS'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 team.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges is the oldest of the six regional accrediting agencies in the United States. Since its inception in 1885, the Association has 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 American and International Schools Abroad (CAISA), and the Commission on Public Schools (CPS), which is comprised of the Committee on Technical and Career Institutions (CTCI), the Committee on Public Elementary and Middle Schools (CPEMS), and the Committee on Public Secondary Schools.

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 CPSS'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 on Public Secondary Schools 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 Evaluation 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 Westport High School, a committee of eight members, including the principal and assistant principals, supervised all aspects of the self-study and 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. In addition to faculty members, the self-study committees included a limited involvement from students, parents, and other members of the school community.

The self-study of Westport High School extended over a period of fifteen school months from November 2011 to March 2013. The visiting committee was pleased to note that some students, parents, and other members of the school community joined the professional staff in the self-study deliberations for meaningful input.

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, Westport 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 sixteen evaluators was assigned by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate Westport High School. The visiting committee members spent four days in Westport, Massachusetts, 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, building and central office administrators and institutions of higher education, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Westport High School.

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 52 hours shadowing 16 students for a half day
- a total of 18 hours of classroom observation (in addition to time shadowing students)
- numerous informal observations in and around the school
- tours of the facility
- individual meetings with 32 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and the assessment of student learning
- group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers
- the examination of student work including a selection of work collected by the school

Each conclusion on 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 the CPSS 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 Westport High School.

## SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

Westport High School is located in Westport, Massachusetts in Bristol County. The town is a seacoast community, with tourism, farming, and fishing as its primary industries. Its proximity to the Boston and Providence job markets has made it attractive for homebuilders. The population of Westport is 15,094 with no identifiable minority group comprising more than 1 percent of the population. English is the primary language spoken by 99 percent of the student population with a few families speaking Portuguese or Spanish at home. The median family income is \$69,319.

The majority of the population is employed in management/business/social service. In 2011 the unemployment rate was 10.1 percent. Also in 2011, 3.7 percent of the school population lived below the poverty level and 22.3 percent were considered low income. The Westport agricultural community includes a vineyard, a microbrewery, fruit and vegetable farms, nursery and tree farms and a variety of livestock farms. The population of Westport Community Schools is 1,744 students, which is 93 students fewer than the previous year. In addition to the high school, there are three other schools. The Alice Macomber Primary School has an enrollment of 241 students, the Westport Elementary School has 509 students and the Westport Middle School has 542 students.

Westport High School includes students in grades 9 through 12 with a total enrollment of 423 students divided between 209 females and 214 males. The school population has remained somewhat stable over the last ten years. Westport residents have the option of attending one of two area vocational schools. On the average, 110 Westport students are enrolled in these vocational schools each year. Approximately 140 Westport students are enrolled in private and/or parochial schools. The ethnic, racial, and cultural composition has remained constant with 0.6 percent African-American students, 0.52 percent Asian students, 2.6 percent Hispanic, .2 percent Native American and .2 percent multi-racial non-Hispanic students during the 2011-2012 school year. The average dropout rate for the last two years has been 3.3 percent, the average daily student attendance 94 percent, and the average attendance among teachers 96 percent.

In 2010, Westport ranked in the lower 20 percent of school districts in the state in terms of per pupil expenditure, spending \$10,594 per student compared to the state average of \$13,005. Students must pay user fees to participate in sports and activities and to ride the bus. There are 39 teachers at Westport High School, creating a ratio of 12:1. Individual class teachers carry an average load of 70 students per term with an average class size of 19. In classes required for graduation, the average class size is 21. Students attend school for 180 days (1000 hours).

Students in grades 9 and 10 may select courses from two levels: college preparatory or honors. Students in grades 11 and 12 may select course from three levels: college preparatory, honors, and Advanced Placement (when offered). Fifty-one percent of students are enrolled in college preparatory classes, 30 percent in honors classes, 15 percent in Advanced Placement courses, and 4 percent in special education classes. Approximately 13 percent of students receive special education services. All students are required to take four years of English,

mathematics, and physical education, three years of science and social studies, one year of world language, one computer class, one government class, and one personal finance class. Students select the remainder of their program from a variety of elective courses. The completion of a Senior Project is a graduation requirement for all students and is part of the English 12 curriculum. Some of these projects have included service to the community; some have resolved a problem, and others have led to the identification of areas where improvements are necessary.

Westport High School offers a variety of co-curricular activities and approximately twenty-five percent of students participate in at least one of them. The Wildcats are one of a few teams in the Mayflower League who have won multiple championships in every sport. The school newspaper, “The Villager”, had the distinction of being the only daily school newspaper in the country and has earned many local and national awards.

These co-curricular activities have also provided ways for students to explore opportunities beyond Westport High School. A CNA course held after school provided the students the course work they need to become a certified nursing assistant. A long-standing connection to a high school in Japan has brought Japanese students to Westport and the school has sent Westport students to Japan. Since 2009, Westport has sponsored a travel abroad program with EFT.

In the class of 2012, 43 percent attended a four-year college, 40 percent attended a two-year college, 5 percent enrolled in a business/technical school, and 12 percent entered the workforce. Westport High School graduates chose from schools such as the United States Naval Academy, UMASS Amherst, UMASS Dartmouth, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Rhode Island School of Design, Massachusetts College of Pharmacy, Brown University, Boston University, Northeastern University, and Providence College.

Westport High School has established effective partnerships with two local colleges whereby juniors and seniors may enroll in one college course each semester at no cost to the student. For the past two summers, there has also been a partnership with one of the colleges which has provided career exploration and MCAS preparation for students identified as at-risk of failing the MCAS tests. Other partners include the Westport Rivershed Alliance, the Westport Police Department, the Westport Education Foundation, South Coast Surgical Center, and Lees Market.

Westport High School students are recognized for their accomplishments through academic and athletic awards along with many locally sponsored scholarships.

# WESTPORT HIGH SCHOOL

## Core Value, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

Westport High School's mission is to educate all students to become 21<sup>st</sup> century learners, to seek and value knowledge, and to emerge as productive citizens in a global community.

We believe:

- All students can learn.
- Students learn best in a safe, supportive, and equitable environment.
- Tolerance of individual differences and cooperative resolution of conflicts create a climate of respect.
- Inquiry and collaboration help students actively engage in the curriculum.
- Essential understanding is demonstrated through effective communication.
- Personal responsibility for behavior and learning leads to success.
- Collaboration among all stakeholders maximizes achievement.

### EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT LEARNING

#### Academic

All students should acquire, integrate and apply enduring understandings, knowledge and skills.

All students should read, write and communicate effectively.

All students should use higher order thinking skills to solve complex problems.

All students should use media and technology effectively.

All students should study, research and work independently and collaboratively.

#### Social

All students should demonstrate personal and social responsibility.

#### Civic

All students should demonstrate civic responsibility.

*Approved November 8, 2011*

**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, INC.**

**COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

**STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION**

**TEACHING AND LEARNING  
STANDARDS**

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

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**CURRICULUM**

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**INSTRUCTION**

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**ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT  
LEARNING**

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# 1

## TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

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### Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

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*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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, as well as district and school community priorities.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Westport High School community engaged in a collaborative and inclusive process informed by research-based practices to identify and commit to the high school's core values and beliefs about learning. The school's leadership team facilitated the process and met often with teachers and provided opportunities for students and parents to identify a set of core values and beliefs about learning. The resulting core values and belief statements articulate Westport High School's commitment to informing school policies with a focus on collaboration, communication, and a climate of respect and success for all students. Faculty, staff, and students can identify core values and belief statements and are able to cite examples that illustrate the school's commitment to the core values, particularly success for every student. The core values and beliefs are posted within the school and are available on the school's website and on various Westport High School documents. The inclusive development process and familiarity by all stakeholders with the school's core values and beliefs guide the development and updating of policies, curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. (self-study, teachers, students, administrators)

The school has adopted seven learning expectations that address academic, social, and civic competencies for every student. These include integrating and applying knowledge, skills and understanding; communicating effectively; using higher-order thinking; using media and technology effectively; working collaboratively; demonstrating personal and social responsibility; and demonstrating civic responsibility. Some school-wide, analytic rubrics have been created to define indicators of successful achievement levels for some of these learning expectations. The rubrics clearly indicate current desired levels of achievement for citizenship, reading, writing, and reasoning and problem-solving expectations. While all teachers use school-wide rubrics to assess student achievement quarterly, many teachers imbed elements of the school-wide rubrics in their course-specific rubrics. The ongoing development of school-wide rubrics to include the assessment of the use of media and technology effectively and the demonstration of civic responsibility will allow for a comprehensive assessment. The present civic expectation does not completely address the distinction between social responsibility and civic competencies. Further clarification of these distinctions and how they will be measured will increase their usability and their impact on the school's core values and beliefs. The consistent use and development of all school-wide rubrics and further clarification of the school's learning expectations will accurately measure the degree to which students meet the school's learning expectations. (teachers, self-study, student work, school documents)

The school community's commitment to collaboration, communication, and a climate of respect and success for all students is actively reflected in the culture of the school. The faculty commitment to support the success of all students is exemplified by the implementation of programs and resources including Integrated Math I and II, Finite Math, Introduction to Algebra, AP Calculus, Modern American Studies, Introduction to Science, History of Rock and Roll, Digital Music Creation, and Reading Workshop. Programs have also been added to aid struggling students. These include Freshman Composition, Credit Recovery, Focus Classroom, Language-based Learning classes, and an Educational Proficiency Plan that is developed for

students identified by their MCAS performance as “struggling”. Students also have the option for dual enrollment at regional institutions of higher education. The development of an advisory program is moving the school toward a more personalized learning environment. Mutual respect and shared responsibility are evident between and among school administration, faculty, and staff. The school’s focus on its core values and beliefs as evident in the school’s teaching and learning culture has resulted in the addition of targeted programs and opportunities that support student success. (parents, support staff, faculty, students)

Westport High School has demonstrated commitment to regularly reviewing and revising its core values, beliefs, and expectations for learning. Data is collected based on the current school-wide rubrics and is shared with the faculty. Formal discussion about data and student work takes place on a limited basis. The leadership team is committed to improving the opportunities for faculty to analyze multiple sources of data for the purpose of reviewing and revising the school’s core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. A thorough review of current research-based practices will be beneficial in guiding regular review and revision of expectations for learning. Continual and thoughtful review of the school’s core values, beliefs, and learning expectations will continue to guide the school’s decision-making processes, and support and enhance the school’s learning environment and culture. (administration, faculty, self-study)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The collaborative process used to develop the school’s core values, beliefs, and learning expectations
2. The implementation of new courses and programs to support student success that reflect the school’s core values, beliefs, and expectations
3. The caring and supportive culture of Westport High School
4. The effort by faculty and staff members to review multiple sources of data while developing and reviewing the school’s 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
5. The familiarity of teachers, students, and parents with the school’s core values, beliefs, and learning expectations
6. The school community’s commitment to collaboration, communication, and a climate of respect and success for all students is actively reflected in the culture of the school

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Assure that all of the school’s 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations are measurable using clearly stated criteria.
2. Develop school-wide rubrics for using media and technology effectively and for demonstrating civic responsibility.

3. Clarify the distinction, in measurable terms, between social expectations and civic expectations measured on the “citizenship rubric.”
4. Provide time for faculty to collaborate to support the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations of the school.

# 2

## TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

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### Curriculum

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*The written and taught curriculum is designed to result in all students achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations for student learning. The written curriculum is the framework within which a school aligns and personalizes the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
  - instructional strategies
  - assessment practices that include the use of school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics.
3. The curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through:
  - inquiry and problem-solving
  - higher order thinking
  - cross-disciplinary learning
  - authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school
  - informed and ethical use of technology.
4. There is clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum.
5. Effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation exist between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district.
6. Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are sufficient to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities.

7. The district provides the school's professional staff with sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research.

## CONCLUSIONS

The written curriculum at Westport High School is purposefully designed to ensure that all students can practice and achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. WHS has assigned each of its departments primary and secondary responsibility for addressing these expectations. School-wide learning expectations are reflected in a curriculum that provides a wide variety of opportunities for all students to participate in a 21<sup>st</sup> century learning experience. While printed copies of the school's expectations are posted in most classrooms, all teachers and many students are aware of these expectations. Curriculum documents for all classes make explicit reference to the school-wide expectations, and school-wide rubrics are used in all classes to assess each student's progress toward meeting these expectations. Students are assessed in the areas of reading, writing, citizenship, and reasoning and problem-solving in accordance with the school's rubrics. These scores are reported on each student's report card at the end of each marking period. The curriculum at WHS aims to foster higher order thinking skills at all grade levels. In math and science classes students are responsible for crafting their own research questions and showcasing their findings. Teachers routinely ask students to support and justify their claims by writing or explaining the steps they took to answer problems. The development of independent, in-depth research skills is also evident in the students' culminating senior projects. As part of a graduation requirement, each student works independently, develops answers to a problem, and showcases findings to class members. Students also synthesize information during this process and in other classes across the curriculum. The social studies department uses document-based questions (DBQ's) in all of their common assessments and similarly, students in the AP Language and Composition courses construct synthesis essays on a variety of topics. Other courses added to the program of studies foster the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations by including technology fluency, government, personal finance, and wellness. Purposeful development, assessment, and revision of the curriculum will positively impact student learning and ensure that students have the opportunity to practice and achieve the school's learning expectations. (self-study, teacher interviews, students, student work)

The written curriculum at Westport High School utilizes a common format and all curriculum documents are made accessible to staff through online resources. Each course outline is written using the Understanding by Design (UbD) model and includes the transfer of knowledge, working backwards from 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, essential questions, specific references to school-wide expectations and state curriculum frameworks, instructional strategies, and assessment techniques. Training is available to all teachers to help establish an understanding of the UbD model and to generate curriculum documents for all units of instruction. Beginning in 2009, all new staff members were trained through an on-site three credit graduate course in collaboration with Endicott College. Representative administrators and teachers attended an Understanding by Design (UbD) training in July 2011 and much time was given during professional development and annual week-long summer institutes to develop this common format. Ongoing collaboration to develop and improve common instructional strategies including assessment practices is in place. Continual curriculum development in conjunction with the UbD model for current and newly implemented courses will ensure commonality of high standards and cohesive instruction and

will have a positive impact on student performance. (teachers, administration, self-study, student work)

The written curriculum emphasizes higher order thinking and problem-solving across all grade levels and within everyday classroom activities. Many teachers encourage students to think critically and to work and solve problems independently during class time. AP Calculus students show their answer to logarithmic problems on individual white boards for the teacher to view. Students verbally justify what properties they used to arrive at their answers. Other opportunities for authentic, student-centered learning are possible due to increased technology at WHS. Students taking AP Literature and Composition utilize the school's netbooks. Using a specific Google App, students peer-edit, self-edit, and revise compare, and contrast essays as the teacher guides by asking clarifying questions. In Freshman Composition, students write essays based on a local or global problem they identify. Students use online resources to research the issue and identify solutions that will effectively solve or mitigate the issue. Administrators at WHS insists that the curriculum guides emphasize inquiry and problem-solving at all levels and across all content areas. According to the results of the Endicott survey, 90 percent of staff agrees that "the formal curriculum in my area emphasizes inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking" and 84 percent of the staff agrees that "the written and taught curriculums are aligned." A curriculum that emphasizes higher order thinking and problem-solving demonstrates the school's commitment to innovative instructional approaches. (teachers, class observations, self-study, Endicott survey)

The curriculum at Westport High School includes limited cross-disciplinary learning opportunities. The English 12 and Mock Trial courses focus on the text *In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote and students participate in the mock trial recreation of the actual trial of the murders detailed in the book. The success of this course led to the implementation of an American Studies course co-taught by an English teacher and a social studies teacher as a permanent part of the school's curriculum. The curriculum emphasizes authentic learning opportunities for students both in and out of school. Students who opt to take journalism produce the school's newspaper "The Villager." Students are able to take courses not offered at Westport High School through online Odysseyware courses and dual enrollment courses offered through Bristol Community College, University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, and Massachusetts Maritime Academy. While the senior project is authentic in itself, a quarter-term class is offered to seniors in need of extra support during the research process. Other courses available to students in need of extra support include MCAS preparation courses, Odysseyware credit recovery, a Competency Determination portfolio class for students at-risk of failing the MCAS, and focus room extra support classes. Students who have an area of interest and who have exhausted all courses may apply to complete an independent study under the supervision and direction of a teacher. Art students were also afforded a unique opportunity during the fourth annual art show to showcase their artwork from the school year. Local artists from the Westport community judged the exhibition. Field trips serve as avenues for authentic learning, specifically the Environmental Science course in which students conduct field studies. They take two field trips to the site in order to gather all necessary data to determine the overall "health" of the stream. They make observations, take measurements, and collect samples. As Westport High School continues to develop cross-

disciplinary opportunities and to engage students in authentic learning and usage of technology, the students' depth of understanding will enhance their ability to meet the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (teachers, students, parents, self-study, student work)

Westport High School is in the process of aligning written and taught curricula across its program of studies. While each course published in the program of studies is aligned with the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, not every course has complete, consistent documentation of its curriculum. As UbD units are still in development, teachers create and submit for approval traditional course syllabi to outline content and assessment in their classes. Student work across several disciplines indicates an inconsistency in the kinds of assignments, the thoroughness of written guidelines for students, the amount and quality of teacher feedback, and the use of course-specific and school-wide rubrics for assessment of student performance. The common assessments, mid-year, and final exams allow teachers to better align written and taught curricula. Teachers review learning objectives and design tasks through which students demonstrate skills related to those expectations, and then adjust future learning activities based on the results of those assessments. Teachers and administrators also use professional development time to assess common tasks and the data that these formative assessments generate. As a result, most teachers have adjusted their instruction to more effectively meet the needs of students and to better align their assessment activities with the written curriculum. Continued implementation of the UbD model throughout the school's program of studies will increase curricular consistency within all of the school's departments and will improve the school's ability to meet its learning expectations for all students. (self-study, student work, teacher interviews, classroom observations)

Coordination of curriculum within the school's academic departments is sufficient. During recent school years a considerable amount of WHS's professional development time has been devoted to curriculum development, the creation of new curriculum documents, and the evaluation of common tasks used within departments. The principal and assistant principal provide leadership in this process, and as a result, the curriculum within the school's departments is sufficiently coordinated, increasingly well documented, and regularly evaluated by the school's faculty. It has been noted that the lack of a structure that includes clear leadership in every department makes it difficult to provide consistent vertical articulation of the curriculum within the departments. This also does not truly allow for detailed planning and collaboration between and among teachers in different disciplines. Vertical articulation of the curriculum with the district's middle school is not consistently effective. Some subject areas such as math show clear evidence of specific coordination with middle school curriculum. District curriculum leadership teams, consisting of administrators and selected teachers from each of the district's schools focus on English language arts, math, social studies, and science. It is reported that these teams meet infrequently after school hours. Since the elementary schools close later than the middle and high schools and meetings are scheduled later in the day, involvement by representatives from the middle and high school levels may not always be possible. The scheduling of these meetings during after-school hours limits the ability to provide effective leadership on specific curriculum coordination between all grade levels. Appropriately scheduling structured opportunities for

teachers to work on vertical articulation of the curriculum will improve the school's ability to achieve its expectations for all of its students. (teachers, self-study, administrators, Statement of Critical Strengths & Needs)

Instructional materials, supplies, staffing, and the school's facility are not sufficient to fully implement the school's stated curriculum and an appropriate range of co-curricular offerings. Staff members and parents express concern about the adequacy of the school's facilities and the school's overall funding as it relates to implementing the school's curriculum. Fifty-nine percent of parents surveyed indicate that the facility is not sufficient to support full implementation of the curriculum, and 80 percent of parents believe that funding is not sufficient to implement an adequate co-curricular program at Westport High School. Staffing levels to support programs such as elective courses in the arts and honors courses in some core areas limit the delivery of a comprehensive program to meet the needs of all students. In the Endicott survey, 49 percent of the staff members report funding levels are not sufficient to fully implement the school's program of studies. These limits have an adverse impact on the school's co-curricular and core offerings, diminishing the opportunities for students to meet the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. In recent years the school has added a considerable amount of technology for classroom instruction and specific course use, and as a result, a variety of educational technology is widely used to deliver instruction across the school's departments. While teachers have some restrictions in their access to computer labs for whole-class use, teachers report that the school technology support staff and library media center staff work effectively to support classroom projects and to assist teachers in completing classroom activities that require research and technology resources. The incorporation of recently acquired mobile wireless computer carts has increased the ability of teachers to schedule whole-class activities that require all students to use computers at the same time. Increased, dependable funding to support adequate staffing, facilities, and materials will improve the school's ability to fully implement its stated curriculum and to offer a more complete variety of co-curricular activities. (self-study, Endicott survey, School and Community Summary, teachers, students, parents)

The district provides the school's professional staff some of the personnel, time, and financial resources necessary for ongoing, collaborative development and evaluation of the school's curriculum. While the high school has devoted much of its professional development time in recent years to this task, both staff members and administrators indicate that much of the work necessary for ongoing curriculum development and review is achieved when teachers collaborate during individual prep times, lunch periods, and other unscheduled opportunities. As a result, 47 percent of the school's teachers reports that they do not have sufficient time to engage in formal curriculum evaluation and review. The lack of identified structured time, collaboration and identified leadership for curriculum development impacts the staff's ability to engage in comprehensive and organized evaluation and review of the curriculum. Despite this shortage of time and resources, the high school faculty has created common assessments for each course in the school's program of studies and teachers have devoted time to evaluating student performance on these assessments in order to adjust both curriculum and instruction throughout the school. Providing more structured time for collaboration within and between departments will allow continued improvement of the school's curriculum. (self-study, teachers, standard committee)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The purposefully designed curriculum that ensures that all students can practice and achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
2. The adoption of the Understanding by Design (UbD) model of curriculum development
3. The provision of training to teachers and administrators in the Understanding by Design (UbD) model of curriculum development
4. The development and implementation of research-based, school-wide curriculum templates to guide curriculum in all subject areas
5. The variety of curriculum focused on higher order thinking and authentic learning tasks
6. The widespread use of data from school-wide common assessment activities to guide improvements to the school's written curriculum
7. The development, assessment, and continual revision of the curriculum in the absence of formal department structure or common planning time

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Provide the time and implement a formal structure to guide curriculum development and revision.
2. Increase formal opportunities for teachers to collaborate within and between departments.
3. Appropriately schedule opportunities to increase collaboration that supports vertical articulation of the curriculum Pre-K through 12.
4. Complete the implementation of the school-wide curriculum templates to guide curriculum development in all disciplines.
5. Expand the opportunities for all students to participate in co-curricular offerings.
6. Increase the cross-disciplinary learning opportunities provided to students through the curriculum.
7. Ensure the alignment of the written and the taught curriculum.
8. Ensure that instructional materials, supplies, staffing, and the school's facility are sufficient to implement the curriculum and meet the needs of students.

# 3

## TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

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### Instruction

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*The quality of instruction is the single most important factor in students' achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
2. Teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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

Westport High School employs instructional practices that work to maintain consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. As a Race to the Top school, Westport recently adopted the SMART goals initiative as part of the new state teacher evaluation system. Teachers have multiple short walkthrough visits by the principal and assistant principal. The teachers state that they have been observed numerous times (there is a minimum of five and many have had closer to ten observations) since the start of the year. The written feedback given by administration is thorough and specific. Teachers' syllabi incorporate the language and spirit of the school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Teachers state that they are sharing student information informally over lunch, in the hallways, and as a part of professional days, but the opportunity to do that in a formal setting more often is desired. In addition to their course grades, each student is evaluated using four school-wide rubrics in each class, each quarter. These rubrics (reading, writing, reasoning and problem solving, and citizenship) directly reflect the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations of the school. The citizenship rubric is linked directly to a student's ability to participate in sports, prom, and other co-curricular activities. Each senior student produces a senior project. They are expected to research and deliver a presentation on a topic of their choosing, based on a problem identification and proposed solution model, exemplifying the expectation of a self-directed learner. The school's core values and beliefs relay to students the values of the school. Presenting the same expectations in each classroom, through their class routines and expectations helps students internalize the school's core value and beliefs.. (self-study, teachers, standard committee)

Westport High School uses instructional strategies that personalize instruction, engage students as active and self-directed learners, encourage students to apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks, and engage students in self-assessment and reflection. Teachers' personalization of instruction is readily evident during and after school hours. Parents relate that they receive specific and timely feedback (both positive and constructive) about their children. In the classroom, teachers frequently check-in with students and ask them to verbalize their understanding, and then tailor their instruction based on the students' responses. Teachers also tailor instruction to include local culture and student interests. For example, lessons were observed in science, Spanish, and English that connected popular, cultural, and environmental information of Bristol County to the content. Teachers differentiate instruction to ensure rigor for the highest-achieving students, the lowest-achieving students, and all students in-between. Teachers scaffold and engage students to become active and self-directed learners using a plethora of strategies throughout the school. Teachers routinely have students work both cooperatively and individually on labs, daily tasks, and research projects – many of which culminate in formal, in-class presentations or essays. It is evident that these activities are commonplace as students easily transition from one activity to the next. Seen throughout the school is evidence of teachers assigning tasks which apply students' knowledge and learning authentically and meaningfully. For example, within the world language department, teachers have students prepare and perform real-

world, situational dialogues that pertain to each thematic unit of study. Self-assessment is a routine practice in many classrooms; for example, teachers shared a modified version of the school-wide rubrics that asks students to complete a self-assessment and reflection of their performance. Personalizing instruction and engaging students to become active and self-directed learners is vital to students' success in high school and encourages them to become life-long learners. (parents, teachers, classroom observations, standard committee, students)

Westport High School teachers support the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations by utilizing strategies that emphasize problem-solving and higher order thinking, integrate technology, and engage students in cross-disciplinary thinking. The school-wide use of Understanding by Design has had an essential impact on learning at Westport High School. It has become routine for students to walk into every classroom and see their lesson objectives and agendas posted in a designated part of the room. These objectives become the focus of the lesson and upcoming lessons and students know what to expect. Some teachers post homework and upcoming assessments along with the objectives and agendas. Teachers begin each unit with the statement of objectives followed by introductory activities that lead to complex, higher order thinking tasks, and a variety of projects. For example, in English class, students are assigned to analyze a classic film or piece of poetry and then compare and contrast it to more modern works. Teachers share their work to engage in cross-disciplinary learning. For example, the music department and world languages department have collaborated to perform traditional seasonal songs in Spanish and Portuguese, and have engaged local musicians to perform in their classrooms. Furthermore, there are specific courses within the curriculum offerings, such as Modern American Studies, a history and English cross-disciplinary course. Lastly, the integration of technology is visibly growing within the school. Every classroom is equipped with a mounted overhead projector and 26 classrooms have installed Mimio devices which allow teachers to project and interact with documents or PowerPoint presentations they created for the class. In some classes Moodle and Google Drive are used for course management which facilitates communication between teachers and their students beyond the classroom. Ninety new netbooks have been purchased for in-class use and additional computers are available to use in the library/media center. While many of the culminating performance tasks for students result in PowerPoint presentations, the use of technology by students to present work seems limited to PowerPoint and Word. The consistent attention to problem-solving, higher order thinking and goal-directed instruction combined with technology increase effective student learning and are essential in helping students to be able to compete in a global community. (classroom observation, standard committee, students, teachers)

Teachers at Westport High School routinely adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by using formative assessment during instructional time, strategically differentiating instruction, purposefully organizing group learning activities and providing support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom. Teachers generally present agendas in a similar format that include an essential question, class activities, and homework. Throughout a class period, teachers display a variety of activities, small group, large group, self-directed, and teacher-directed, that are tailored to the specific purpose of the activity. A variety of formative assessment techniques were observed in the classrooms; for example, questions to individual students, written practice with teacher observation and

feedback, and surveying students with the use of individual whiteboards they could hold up for the teacher to see. Teachers express that they utilize the expertise of the reading specialist and the librarian to assist them in meeting the needs of their students by engaging these people to teach model classes or to help plan instruction. Communication with all parents is done through quarterly report cards and mid-quarter progress reports. Many parents have additional communication with the faculty and administration through mail, email, and phone calls. Parents express that they have access to teachers via email as needed to increase home-school communication. Presently, there is no student information system that includes secure access for teachers, parents, and students, such as a parent portal. Parents report that teachers are responsive to their concerns and pro-active in letting them know if they noticed anything concerning in the classroom. Consistent and school-wide use of the rubrics in each class is a real strength of the school. Teachers are expected to report a score for each student, for each school-wide rubric each quarter. Data from these rubrics is collected by the administration and used to help identify struggling students. Students performing unsatisfactorily in the citizenship rubric in more than two classes may not be able to participate in sports or to attend the prom. The administration attempts to disseminate information about MCAS testing, rubric evaluations, and performance in previous classes to teachers in a timely fashion, but they lack a system that will assist them in this dissemination. The practice currently in place requires hand entry, history searching, and documenting by the administrative team. This data entry must be streamlined to give greater access with greater ease to the teachers who work daily with these students. Westport High School responds to individual student needs through the creation of classes such as MCAS prep, to work with students who have scored low previously on MCAS or who are identified by their teachers as needing support. To help students who have failed classes, summer school and Odysseyware courses are also ways the school addresses the need for credit recovery to help students recover from their setback. Additionally, administrators conducted a meeting to reach out to parents of those freshmen whom teachers had identified as struggling. The goal of this meeting was to affirm that it is a challenging time for many students, to make them aware of the opportunities for support within the school, and to discuss strategies that they might implement at home. Teachers utilize a variety of strategies for engaging learners in the classroom and use these strategies purposefully and prescriptively to maximize student engagement and performance. (classroom observation, teachers, standard committee, student work)

Westport High School teachers both individually and collaboratively seek opportunities to improve instructional practices using student achievement data, examining student work, using feedback from a variety of sources, and engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice. Common tasks or assessments are given in each class at least once per quarter to assure that students are given access to similar material to students in different sections of the same course. Professional development time is scheduled throughout the year and teachers feel that it is worthwhile and provides opportunities to improve instructional practices. Some of the time is planned and directed by the administration (principal, assistant principal, technology director, assistant superintendent) and some of the time is given to teachers to work with their curriculum peers. Teachers within disciplines work very hard to find opportunities to collaborate, plan effectively, and share data without formalized department leadership. They often seek additional

opportunities to collaborate, utilizing common lunch periods, shared blocks, and after-school time. A few departments use Google documents to share resources, but find this is an inadequate substitute for actual face-time with each other. While consistencies within departments are noted, the use of writing templates across the disciplines varies from department to department. Opportunities for interdepartmental sharing of instructional strategies will assist students to recognize commonalities among disciplines. The principal and assistant principal work to share student data such as MCAS scores, rubric scores, and previous course performance with teachers; however, their system for collecting and disseminating this data is cumbersome and labor-intensive. Teachers shadowed students for the last two years in preparation for this visit and found the experience of seeing instructional practices of colleagues in other departments helpful and enlightening. The faculty's dedication to the sharing of instructional strategies and student data collected within and outside the classroom optimizes the teacher's ability to differentiate and individualize instruction fluently and flexibly. (student work, teachers, principal, standard committee)

Westport High School teachers maintain expertise in their content area. Westport Community School District reimburses teachers 50 percent for tuition of classes, workshops, and conferences. Teachers attend courses offered by local colleges such as University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, Bristol Community College, American International College, Northeastern University, Providence College, and Endicott College. Math Teachers are taking classes in mathematics; the world language teachers continue to attend Massachusetts Foreign Language Association (MAFLA) conferences; the assistant superintendent provides English Language Arts workshops, and Landmark Outreach has been brought to Westport for specific instruction in language-based learning disabilities for the special education department and for some content-specific teachers. Through a grant obtained, AP and pre-AP teachers will attend conferences this summer. Teachers new to the district are required to take a graduate level three-credit course, Curriculum and Instruction for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, sponsored by Endicott College. The teachers express that they are encouraged and supported in their pursuit of furthering their knowledge and understanding of their content area and relevant educational pedagogy. Time and monetary support of teachers to further their knowledge in their subject areas promotes a culture of life-long learners benefitting students, teachers, and administration. (self-study, teachers, assistant superintendent, standard committee)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The self-directed senior project and the many opportunities prior to the senior project that students have to present in formal and informal settings
2. The individual attention given to students by teachers, administrators, and support personnel
3. The consistent application of goal-directed routines throughout each classroom
4. Instructional methods that are responsive to student needs
5. Reimbursement at a current rate of 50 percent for workshops, courses, and conferences

6. The practice of teachers shadowing students to reflect on curriculum, instruction, and assessment
7. The teachers who both individually and collaboratively seek opportunities to improve instructional practices
8. The variety of practices utilized by teachers including formative assessment to enhance instructional practices and improve student learning
9. The use of strategies that support the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and emphasize problem-solving and higher order thinking, integrate technology, and engage students in cross-disciplinary thinking
10. the quality and the quantity of feedback provided to teacher to ensure that instructional practices are aligned with the school's core values and beliefs about learning

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Provide more formal opportunities for intradepartmental collaboration.
2. Include other forms of new instructional and presentational technology in all classrooms and provide training in its use.
3. Increase opportunities for interdepartmental sharing of instructional strategies to foster commonality among disciplines.
4. Implement a system for efficiently collecting and disseminating student achievement data.
5. Implement a student information system that includes secure access for teachers, parents, and students.
6. Implement formal opportunities for administration, teachers, and support personnel to share and analyze student assessment data from multiple sources.

# 4

## TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

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### Assessment of and for Student Learning

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*Assessment informs students and stakeholders of progress and growth toward meeting the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
2. The school's professional staff communicates:
  - individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to students and their families
  - the school's progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed.
5. Prior to summative assessments, teachers provide students with the corresponding rubrics.
6. In each unit of study, teachers employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments.
7. Teachers collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments.
8. Teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work.
9. Teachers regularly use formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning.
10. Teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice, including all of the following:

- student work
  - common course and common grade-level assessments
  - individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
  - standardized assessments
  - data from sending schools, receiving schools, and post-secondary institutions
  - survey data from current students and alumni.
11. Grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning.

## ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT LEARNING

### CONCLUSIONS

The school's 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Through the use of school-wide and class-specific rubrics, teachers report student progress in achieving the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations in the areas of writing, reading, reasoning and problem-solving, and citizenship, for their designated areas of primary responsibility twice a semester. The school-wide rubrics are part of the student report card and the assessment in the four areas is formally communicated to both students and parents in every content area twice in a semester. School administrators assess whole-school progress in meeting the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations by tabulating and analyzing the data following the close of each marking period. Teachers use this data to adjust and refine their formative classroom assessments. Continued assessment of student progress based on school-wide rubrics will lead to increased student achievement. (teachers, Endicott survey, parents, guidance)

The school's professional staff communicates individual student progress to students and their families in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations in most areas through the use of the four school-wide rubrics. All students are informed of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations at class assemblies at the opening of the school year; learning expectations are included as part of each class syllabus and are given to students at the start of the semester. Although rubrics are not completely developed for all areas, student progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations is reported to both students and parents on report cards in every content area. Seventy-one percent of parents agree that the school provides them with a formal report which explains their child's progress in achieving the school-wide learning expectations. Results of the learning expectations embedded in the rubrics are shared on the school website. At this time there is no portal that allows parents to independently access individual student progress. The professional staff's commitment to communicate progress to students and their families allows them to monitor their progress in achieving the school's learning expectations. (teachers, Endicott survey, administration)

The professional staff at Westport High School collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement. Teachers often analyze formative assessment data to respond to inconsistencies in student achievement. For example, the math, science, and English departments analyze MCAS results to adjust and modify instruction and assessments. English teachers formally evaluate AP results to address weaknesses in the curriculum and to modify instruction. Each department reports to the administration the results of common task assessments, given twice per term in content areas. Results are compiled and disaggregated to staff as part of professional development. The school identifies students having difficulty achieving their potential on MCAS and uses the data to tier interventions with struggling students during the school day, after school, and during the summer. The continued use of professional meeting time allows staff to analyze and identify inequities in student learning which will lead to increased student achievement. (administration, teachers, self-study)

Prior to each unit of study, many teachers communicate to students the school's applicable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed. Across all content areas many teachers post or verbally communicate a daily learning objective in the classroom that aligns with and communicates the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations for students. Many teachers include the learning goals to be assessed along with the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations on student assignments for both formal and informal assignments. Many teachers post essential questions as introductions to lessons and units. Teachers who communicate expectations to students establish a connection between course content and school-wide learning expectations and allow students to be more actively engaged in their learning. (students, student work, teachers, classroom observations)

Teachers provide students with the corresponding rubrics prior to summative assessments. The corresponding school-wide rubrics are distributed with most assignments such as assessments, projects, and process papers. Students are assessed in the areas of reading, writing, citizenship, and problem-solving across all content areas. Additionally, some teachers create assessment-specific rubrics for tasks that include projects, labs, and writing assignments. By providing rubrics prior to conducting a summative assessment, students are aware of how their performance will be evaluated. (self-study, classroom observations, student work, teachers, students)

In each unit of study, teachers employ a range of both formative and summative assessments. Many teachers check in frequently with students to determine the students' level of understanding. Teachers use journal prompts, activators, checking for understanding, tickets-to-leave, and peer evaluation to guide students toward learning. Some student self-assessment of work can be seen in students' grading their own English and history essays for development of evidence and commentary. Teachers use a variety of summative assessments to measure student understanding such as research papers, lab reports, portfolios, writing assignments, multiple choice, oral presentations, PowerPoint presentations, student-created films, formative and summative tests, Socratic seminars, and the senior project. Some teachers provide students with opportunities to revise and improve upon their work through self-assessment and peer edits as seen in the English department with the use of Google books. Using data from formative and summative assessments, instruction is modified to meet the needs of individual students and to provide accommodations whereby all students have the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of content. (self-study, teachers, class observations)

Teachers collaborate on their creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments. Currently, teachers submit the results of common assessments to administrators, who analyze and disseminate these results back to teachers. While all teachers frequently collaborate informally to refine and revise a variety of assessments, the majority of the formal collaboration is done on professional days, as there are no formal monthly department meetings. Some teachers cite common prep time as an opportunity to collaborate, although many feel it is not always effective. As a result of the informal collaboration that does take place, the math, science, and English departments have revised assessments to address content strand weaknesses in student performance on

MCAS tests. Additionally, teachers in all content areas have revised more complex written assessments to assist students in accessing the text and enhancing comprehension. Structured collaboration time will provide opportunities to ensure that common assessments promote student success in meeting the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (teachers, self-study, administration)

Many teachers regularly provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work. Most teachers circulate through the classroom checking-in with students and offering clarification or guidance as students complete an assignment or an activity. English teachers provide students interactive feedback in class on written assignments through the use of Google books. Many teachers measure student understanding during class and modify instruction based on student answers to follow-up questions and probing questions to elicit higher understanding of topic matter. Many teachers provide students with corrective feedback based on assignment rubrics; however, often times, individual and specific written feedback is limited. Sixty-Seven percent of students report that their teachers offer suggestions that help them improve their work. When all students receive consistent and specific feedback aligned with school-wide learning rubric criteria, they will be able to revise and improve their work more consistently and effectively. (Endicott survey, student work, classroom observations, student shadowing)

Teachers regularly use formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning. Activators are used to review concepts prior to instruction in many disciplines through the use of check-ins, checking for understanding, worksheets, and questions. Review of vocabulary and graphic organizers are used to measure student understanding prior to teachers introducing new content topics. Whole class discussions and individual feedback, both written and oral, allow teachers to adapt their instruction in the classroom. Use of partial time during professional days and faculty meetings enable teachers to collect and examine data on common formative assessments; results of the data are used to revise and benchmark existing assessments to improve student learning by re-teaching, adjusting or explaining material in a different way. Some teachers use formative assessments to differentiate instruction by allowing students to choose topics and methods to demonstrate comprehension of material and concepts. Teachers in the English, history, and science departments have collaborated with the reading specialist to adapt and differentiate instruction for struggling learners, focusing on literacy skills to enable them to access the content. As a result of these practices, students are engaged in their learning, and teachers are able to adapt their instruction so that students can be more successful on summative assessments. (classroom observations, teachers, self-study)

Teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice on a formal and informal basis. The results of standardized tests such as AP, SAT, and MCAS are reviewed during staff meetings and during professional development time to find ways to improve curricula and instruction. Grants have been awarded for the purpose of providing students with additional instruction, during the school day and during the summer, in order to improve their performance on MCAS and SAT tests. Additionally, English teachers have placed more emphasis on reading non-fiction and poetry

to improve MCAS scores. Teachers review results of common tasks to adjust instruction and to improve student understanding and performance on assessments. The use of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations has encouraged discussion regarding curriculum, instruction, and assessment that have led to revisions of formative and summative assessments. Guidance counselors use data from report cards along with individual student meetings to identify struggling students and develop ways to help them be successful in their classes. Rubrics are used to identify at-risk students, particularly in grades nine and ten, so that early intervention can be instituted to help these students become successful. There is, however, no evidence that alumni are surveyed nor is there data available from alumni, that could be used to improve instruction or assessment of student work. Teachers and administrators examine a range of assessment evidence; as a result of analyzing a variety of assessments, teachers improve their instructional practices. The collection of meaningful data from multiple sources of assessment and alumni responses would result in informed decisions about instruction. (self-study, teachers, administration)

Grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about student learning. Assessment of student progress as measured by school-wide rubrics is included on individual student report cards four times during the school year. The school-wide results are reviewed by administration and are available on the school website. During professional days, some time is allocated for each department to review and revise, as necessary, its grading formats and criteria to ensure alignment with the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. In the fall of 2012 teachers heavily revised the evaluation criteria of the reading rubric. Continued review and revision of the school's core values and beliefs by teachers and administration will improve the effectiveness of instructional and assessment practices on a formal basis. (self-study, administration, teachers)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The use of data collected from common tasks that drives future decisions about instruction and assessments
2. Targeted support provided to struggling students as a results of data analysis
3. The consistent use of the school-wide rubrics by teachers
4. The communication of school-wide rubric results as part of the regular report card
5. The implementation of peer assessment and multiple opportunities for revision and student success
6. The formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, implemented to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations

7. The communication of individual student progress to students and their families in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations in most areas through the use of the four school-wide rubrics
8. The daily communication of learning goals to students
9. The use journal prompts, activators, checking for understanding, tickets-to-leave, and peer evaluation to guide students toward learning
10. The regular use of formative assessment to inform and adapt instruction for the purpose of improving student learning
11. The review of standardized tests such as AP, SAT, and MCAS for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Implement a portal for parents to access real-time student information.
2. Provide formal collaboration time for teachers to refine and revise common formative and summative assessments.
3. Provide students with more specific, narrative, and individualized feedback when evaluating student work in conjunction with the use of rubrics.
4. Regularly obtain data from alumni to guide the revision of curriculum, assessment, and instruction.

**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, INC.**

**COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

**SUPPORT STANDARDS**

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**SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP**

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**SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**

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**COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR  
LEARNING**

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# 5

## SUPPORT STANDARD

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### School Culture and Leadership

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

1. The school community consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all.
2. The school is equitable, inclusive, and fosters heterogeneity where every student over the course of the high school experience is enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core course (English/language arts, social studies, math, science, or world languages).
3. There is a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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

At Westport High School 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. The foreword in the student handbook exhorts students to “aim to do your best always,” and to believe that a good education will improve their lives, and urges students to get involved in their school. The WHS mission statement, core values, and beliefs are closely aligned so that students “emerge as productive citizens in a global community.” Students are proud of the senior project, many of which have local and community connections.

High behavioral expectations exist for all students. Good attendance is defined as “in-class, on-time behavior.” A consistent tardiness policy is enforced throughout the school with clear consequences for students who are late to school and/or class. Three tardies earn a student a one-hour office detention, with subsequent detentions assigned after the next three. Consequences escalate after that and can lead to an unsatisfactory rating in citizenship on the school-wide rubric. Two unsatisfactory ratings can lead to the denial of privileges such as participating in extracurricular activities or attending the prom. In previous years, chronic tardiness to school had been a problem. It has been reported that tardiness to school has significantly decreased after the current principal’s arrival and clear, higher expectations for on-time arrival to school. The principal herself enforces the tardy to school policy by standing at the main entrance to greet students, hand them a tardy slip and assign an office detention or other consequence, if applicable. Other significant supports exist to ensure a safe and orderly school climate and to minimize class disruptions. A no-pass list ensures that identified students are escorted to and from the bathroom or other locations to minimize wandering or excessive time out of class. The school resource officer, campus supervisor, in-school suspension room teacher, and FOCUS room teacher provide behavioral support in conjunction with the assistant principal to assist students in making choices that will not interfere with teaching and learning. The FOCUS program, formerly a substantially separate “behavior room” exclusively for students diagnosed with social-emotional disabilities, has been opened up to any student who needs behavioral support, not just those on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) as before. This has minimized behavioral issues throughout the school. These services are delivered in a supportive and corrective manner, rather than punitively, with an emphasis on helping students get back on track and return them to general education classrooms.

Students and parents speak with high regard about school safety. In general, many students feel supported by the administration, teachers, and their peers. Many programs have been implemented targeting at-risk populations in an effort to improve school culture. Some of these programs include credit recovery opportunities, summer school partnership with Bristol Community College and Odysseyware (online courses), and MCAS prep tutorial courses for identified at-risk students. The emerging use of school-wide rubrics, particularly in regards to citizenship, result in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations. The

continuous efforts to design and deliver programs for at-risk populations serve to build a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture. (students, self-study, teacher interviews)

The school is equitable, inclusive, and consciously fosters heterogeneity where every student over the course of the high school experience is enrolled in a minimum of one, heterogeneously grouped core course. At Westport High School it is a graduation requirement that all students take two heterogeneously grouped courses: world language and government. These courses are both non-leveled and provide challenging experiences and high expectations for all students. Additionally, some students take elective courses such as Personal Finance and Tech Fluency that are also heterogeneously grouped. These heterogeneously grouped classes are designed to ensure that all students regardless of ability level have access to challenging learning experiences and access to diverse student populations. (self-study, student shadowing, school leadership)

Across the school, there is a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. In the fall of 2012, WHS implemented a formal advisory program designed to foster positive relationships and afford every student the opportunity to have an accessible, supportive adult in the building. Students meet approximately ten times throughout the school year and are grouped by grade level. The program adheres to a curriculum that is based on *School-Connect*, a prescribed resource that was adapted to fit the needs of the school using the Understanding by Design format. This design helps to ensure that all advisory groups are heterogeneous and content is grade appropriate. Topics for underclassman may include but are not limited to adjustment to the high school, stress, tolerance, and managing priorities. Topics for upperclassmen may include but are not limited to school and community awareness, post-secondary school plans, high stakes testing, and personal decision-making. The continuation of the advisory program will foster positive communications and relationships between staff and students. (classroom observations, self-study, school leadership)

In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff frequently engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning. Many teachers use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices, and apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The assistant principal is a former curriculum supervisor (ELA) and embodies the unofficial role of high school curriculum leader in the absence of department heads. These positions fell victim to budget cuts in past years. WHS has leveraged her experience to bring professional development opportunities to its staff.

Monthly staff meetings have an instructional focus based on an agenda developed well in advance by the principal and assistant principal. The administration shares best practices they have witnessed during classroom observations. Staff meeting time is spent analyzing and discussing departmental common tasks (assessments), and identifying strengths and weaknesses in student performance, and strategies for improvement. Additionally, the administration frequently presents articles from professional journals that

incorporate current research and best practices. An example of this recently was an article on feedback and formative assessment.

All first-year teachers in the district – including experienced educators – are required to take a new-teacher course instructed by the assistant principal using the district’s Understanding by Design learning template. Teachers earn three graduate credits for their coursework in partnership with Endicott College, and are reimbursed 50 percent of the cost of the course. Many teachers also report taking graduate courses and attending conferences to enhance their teaching strategies and content specific knowledge.

WHS does not have department heads, however, some teachers take the initiative to lead professional development discussions within departments. In some disciplines, teachers use shared on-line space on Google Drive where lessons and resources are posted. Professional development provides opportunities for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning. The administrators at WHS are professional development leaders who help to acquire resources outside of school and are dedicated to implementing professional development. (teachers, self-study, school leadership)

School leaders regularly use research-based evaluations and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning. During the 2012-2013 school year, the Westport High School administrators reviewed, were trained for, and implemented the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education evaluation system, after Westport was designated as a Race to the Top district. In order to make this implementation as effective as possible, administrators identify and share with staff in advance specific instructional or assessment practices that they will be looking for during informal and formal classroom observations. Administrators have worked to provide exemplars and modeling examples that reflect best practices such as distributing excerpts from *Total Participation Techniques*. Teachers also reported that administrators offered workshops and support to teachers to understand the intricacies of the new system. During student shadowing and in teacher interviews, it was clear that many teachers utilized the components of the UbD process in their lesson planning. Many teachers report that new evaluation system is highly personalized and timely and detailed feedback is presented within a short period of time after the observation. In implementing the new state-mandated evaluation system, the administration took a pro-active, systematic approach which reduced teacher anxiety, clarified expectations, and as a result, maintains a focus on improved student learning. (teachers, self-study, school leadership)

The organization of time supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students. Westport utilizes block scheduling which helps to support the implementation of effective instructional practices. Instructional activities observed during many of the 86-minute periods revealed careful consideration by teachers to include varied instructional practices and strategies to maximize student engagement and to minimize off-task behavior. Teachers periodically referred to the goals posted for each class to maintain focus on the task at hand and its relevance. Three years ago, the block schedule was dropped and replaced with a seven-period double rotation schedule. After one year and careful consideration, research and analysis by teachers,

administration, and students the school supported the return to a four-period, semester-based block schedule. Analysis of data indicated that block scheduling provided greater opportunities for success, depth of understanding, and provided more opportunities for credit recovery than did the seven-period, double-rotating schedule. Professional collaboration among teachers occurs informally during prep periods, more by coincidence than by design. In the math department, the teachers have taken steps to overcome this by creating an on-line departmental space on Google Drive dedicated to sharing teaching resources, lessons, and other tools to enhance student learning. The current block schedule supports research-based instruction and meets the learning needs of all students. (student shadowing, self-study, teachers)

Student load and class size enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students. At WHS the majority of class sizes are appropriate and with rare exception do not exceed 25 students. Students, teachers, and parents boast class size as a contributing factor to a positive learning environment and one of the school's greatest strengths. Numerous courses in a variety of disciplines are co-taught leading to favorable student-teacher ratios. The WHS adaptation and implementation of "concepts of effective schools" which include collaboration, equity, engagement, and personalization are visible across the school and help to meet the learning needs of individual students. Students and teachers report conferencing, varied instructional practices, after-school help, common tasks, and analysis of student achievement data. Teachers utilize formative assessments and provide timely feedback. Class sizes allow teachers to personalize learning to meet individual student needs while also promoting the school's core values and beliefs. (classroom observations, self-study, students)

The principal, working with other building leaders, deliberately and consistently, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. Students, teachers, and parents report that both the principal and assistant principal have a strong, positive, and visible presence at the high school. Students and parents report that the principal knows the name and personal detail(s) of almost every student in the building. The principal and assistant principal, working with a teacher-driven team of building leaders, have researched, designed, and implemented the advisory program. This program ties directly into the mission statement and core values encouraging students to become "productive students in a global community." Advisory topics, which vary according to grade level, include anti-bullying, decision making, school and community service involvement, and coping with change and uncertainty just to name a few.

The principal and assistant principal consistently work to formally incorporate an instructional focus into each monthly staff meeting and professional development meetings. The school-wide adoption of the UbD program with its focus on essential understanding, inquiry, and collaboration have provided a foundation for consistent instruction and assessment across disciplines. The principal and assistant principal work collectively with content-specific teachers to review and revise department curricula. In conjunction with curriculum revisions, the school formally adopted and consistently use school-wide rubrics, which include reading, writing, citizenship, and reasoning and problem solving. These

practices under the leadership of the administration combine to bring to life the core values, beliefs and learning expectations at Westport High School. (self-study, students, teachers)

Teachers, students and parents are frequently involved both formally and informally in the decision-making process. Parents have the opportunity to join the school council which meets monthly, but many report the genuine accessibility of the principal is truly their vehicle to be heard. Many parents report calling her with questions and concerns and are pleased with her speedy responsiveness. These inquiries range from concerns about school culture to fulfilling the needs of individual education plans. The Endicott survey indicates that 72.7 percent of parents believe they have the opportunities to be involved in important decisions at the school.

Students feel the same connection and availability to the building principal. Students interact with the principal in the hallways, classrooms, and cafeteria as well as at extra-curricular events. Formally, students are represented in the student council and can advocate for their peers. The principal reports frequent interaction with the student council president in matters regarding responsibility and ownership. According to the Endicott survey results 45 percent of students report they have input in important decisions.

The Endicott survey indicates that many of the staff believes that teachers, students, and parents are meaningfully involved in the decision-making process to promote an atmosphere of responsibility and ownership. During teacher interviews it was widely reported that teachers feel they are valued members of the decision-making process. In many areas teachers cite the administration's open door policy, which enables them to bring forward issues related to curriculum, assessment, and/or school climate. There are varied opportunities for parents and students but more opportunities exist for teachers to be involved in decisions that promote responsibility and ownership at Westport High School. (Endicott survey, parents, teachers)

Teachers regularly exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. Frequent opportunities exist for teachers to be involved in decisions that affect school improvement and student engagement at WHS. The faculty is viewed as a decision-making body, and has a voice in matters related to teaching and learning. For example, teachers are invited to participate in interview committees when new staff members are hired. The teaching staff was involved in the decision to select new chemistry and physics textbooks to replace aging editions. Teachers are provided opportunities to organize programs such as trips abroad, propose new clubs such as the ADVOCATS community service and credit recovery club, as well as other activities. While content leadership positions were implemented three years ago to take the place of previously eliminated department head positions, these too were eliminated due to financial pressure. Instead, the school administration has attempted to compensate for the lack of department heads through their emphasis on teaching and learning at each staff meeting and during the school's professional development days each year. This is facilitated in part by the assistant principal's strong background in curriculum as a former district curriculum supervisor. Many staff members participate and receive stipends for summer curriculum institutes which help to facilitate school improvement and student engagement. Additional

professional development has been offered in evaluation and feedback, developing units of study, and backwards design. Teachers and administration report strong staff participation in RTI meetings that are held after school without compensation. The school size lends itself to distributed leadership in which staff feels they have a stake in and can influence decisions related to school improvement and student engagement. When the block schedule was eliminated a few years ago there was an effort, which included students and teachers, to reinstate it. While unified discussions about curriculum are driven by the administration, and opportunities exist for discussions within departments and between levels (school-to-school), no formal mechanism exists for inter-departmental communication on matters related to school improvement and student engagement. The collegial, collaborative culture that has been fostered by the administration has had a positive impact on student engagement and learning. (teachers, self-study, teacher interviews)

The school committee, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The school committee develops and approves policies and practices that support the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations including the district policy manual, *Student Handbook*, program of studies, School Improvement Plan and District Improvement Plan. The superintendent communicates these plans to the principal, who is responsible for their implementation. The principal reports to both the superintendent and to the school committee at monthly meetings on the school's progress in implementing those policies and practices. In the face of significant financial constraints, the principal has demonstrated creativity maintaining existing programs and initiatives and adding new ones that support the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The principal has been able to successfully introduce the new state evaluation system, a school-wide advisory program, credit recovery and other supports for at-risk students. At the same time, she has led the school's effort to join the statewide Massachusetts Math & Science Initiative (MMSI), aimed at strengthening the school's Advanced Placement program. Currently, WHS has made it to the final round of the selection process for possible inclusion in a new MMSI cohort. Under her leadership, the number of WHS students enrolled in AP courses, and receiving qualifying scores on AP exams, has increased. The relationship that exists between and among the school committee, superintendent, and the principal enables the principal to promote and achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, school committee, school leadership)

The school committee and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school. The relationship between and among the school committee, superintendent, and principal is characterized by open, two-way communication and autonomy given to the principal in building-level decision-making. The principal reported being sufficiently independent in her decision-making. She is given the authority both in day-to-day school operations and in the implementation of programs aimed at increasing student success and well-being. Budgetary constraints are cited frequently as limiting factors with respect to school operations, staffing levels, and new initiatives, but there is a high level of confidence that the principal's focus on student achievement and improving teaching and learning is done in the most cost-effective manner possible. According to the Endicott survey, 52 percent of staff agrees that the school committee and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the

school in pursuit of its core values. Significantly, 73 percent of parents agree. The relationship between district leadership and the principal has a positive impact on the school's culture at all levels resulting in effective leadership. (school leadership, Endicott survey, self-study)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. School-wide rubric for citizenship used as a metric to gauge student behaviors supports a positive school culture and the accomplishment of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
2. The consistent implementation of the citizenship rubric along with clearly defined consequences
3. The return to a four-period, semester-based block schedule after careful consideration, research and analysis by teachers, administration, and students
4. The heterogeneously grouped classes promoting school culture and maintaining high expectations for all students
5. The implementation of the school-wide advisory program
6. The school administration's careful and thoughtful implementation of the new state teacher evaluation system
7. The planned and purposeful staff meetings focusing on improving teaching and learning
8. The programs that support at-risk students meant to reduce disruptions to learning, help students focus, and address root causes for behavior issues

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Continue to refine and implement the advisory program to meet the needs of the Westport High School community.
2. Provide organized time for consistent, professional collaboration within and between departments to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices that meet the needs of all students.
3. Continue to assess the effectiveness of the schedule to ensure that the daily block schedule supports the core values and the school's beliefs about learning.

# 6

## SUPPORT STANDARD

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### School Resources for Learning

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*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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.*

4. 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
5. The school provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services.
6. Support services staff use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student.
7. 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
8. 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
9. 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
10. 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.

## **SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Westport High School has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students that support each student's achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Each student is assigned to a guidance counselor and participates in a grade level advisory program. The advisory program is a personalization program that connects each student with at least one adult who knows the student and helps the student develop a sense of belonging to WHS. The advisory program also helps students transition to WHS and develop 21<sup>st</sup> century habits that are necessary for college and career readiness. Westport High School has two school adjustment counselors that are available to all, including at-risk students. The school ensures that intervention strategies for at-risk students are timely, coordinated, and directive through Student Concerns Meetings, RTI (Response to Intervention Team), and the Project Action program. These services are for all students, especially the at-risk students. The Student Concern Meetings are held once per month and involves the administration, school resource officer, school adjustments counselors, and the school nurse. The students discussed at this meeting are students about whom one or more staff members have concerns. Discussions range from failing classes, increased negative behaviors inside and/or outside of school, a recent loss, a medical issue, or anything that has come to the attention of school staff that is affecting the student's ability to be successful at WHS. The Student Concerns Meeting puts preventative measures in place to insure that all students have the support to achieve the school's learning expectations. The RTI process begins when a staff member fills out a RTI Referral form, and then the student's assigned guidance counselor has a meeting at the earliest convenience. The administration, school adjustment counselor, and any other school staff member involved with the student are invited to a meeting that is held after school. The RTI team describes the problem, student strengths, challenges, and support services that are currently in place. The RTI team develops an action plan that includes intervention strategies that will be implemented and the staff is responsible for the implementation. The student's parent is contacted by a team member and is made aware of the action plan for their child. Project Action is a collaborative program which is funded by a grant. The program offers a wide variety of academic and social and emotional support for at-risk students that include counseling, credit recovery, visits to the local community college, substance abuse treatments, and career seminars. The referral for Project Action involves a recommendation from either a school staff member or parents and requires parent consent. The intervention strategies used by Westport High School ensure that all students, including those identified as at-risk, achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (support staff, self-study, teacher, school leadership)

Westport High School provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services. Resources, programs, and services are available for all students to support them in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Relevant information is relayed to parents by guidance newsletters mailed to the home, communication nights, communication via phone and email, and the Westport Community Schools and Westport High School websites. The guidance department provides

newsletters to every family and provides information about events happening at the school such as college night, field trips, school events, community service opportunities, and available scholarships. Parents are kept informed about relevant information about their child during communication nights scheduled four times a year. All of the Westport High School faculty and staff members are available for the families at the communication nights to discuss any issues regarding their child, to update families on their child's progress, and to provide information and assist with course selection. Individual communication between schools and families is dependent on what is most convenient for the family. Email and telephone are the most common modes of communication. The support services provide information to families about the various services available from outside agencies for all, especially at-risk students, on an as needed basis. The Westport Community Schools website provides information about school announcements, the district-wide calendar, parent groups, the health office, Moodle, and other relevant information about Westport Community Schools. The Westport High School website provides information about athletics, program of studies, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The school leadership and faculty would like to implement a "parent portal" for families to view their student's progress on-line and eliminate paper progress and report cards. The current version of the student management program (MMS) is outdated and does not include an online portal. Consistent delivery of relevant and reliable information about available support services to families of students and to the Westport community increases awareness of the many services available for all students and serves to keep the parents up-to-date with current information. (self-study, parents, district website, teachers, school leadership, support staff, Endicott survey)

The support services staff at Westport High School delivers an effective range of coordinated services for each student through the use of available technology. The guidance department tracks student records through the district student management program (MMS). Guidance also instructs and guides students in using the College Board's many applications for college search and the application process (Common Application). The nurse also uses MMS in tracking student health concerns. This MMS is an older version, and does not consistently allow for the sharing of student data among the different support services to collaborate more efficiently. The library/media center uses Moodle to allow students to be independent learners of information literacy both in school and remotely. Two laptop carts are also located in the library/media center for both student and class use. The special education and guidance staff uses technology to write Individualized Education Plans (IEP) and 504 plans. This program (Esped) enables the support service staff to communicate with each other about student goals and progress. The use of technology helps support staff to deliver services that support 21<sup>st</sup> century learning for all students. Students with special needs are also provided with assistive technology, such as iPads and laptops, that enable them to access the school's curriculum and assist them as they strive to meet the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, support staff, administration, teachers, parents, guidance staff, students)

School counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel who deliver a written, developmental program, and meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career and college counseling, engage in individual and group meetings with all students. They also deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and

area mental health agencies and social service providers. Counselors use ongoing relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community to improve services, and ensure each student achieves the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Two guidance counselors and the principal have been participating the MA Model Implementation Institute which has been a resource in the revision of the Unit of Study that reflects the MASCA (Massachusetts Schools Counselors Association) and College and Career Readiness Standards. The revised curriculum requires a quarterly seminar for each grade. Along with meeting quarterly, the guidance counselors meet with the students individually at least twice a year and on an as-needed basis. The school adjustment counselors meet with students upon the request of the student, staff, or parent. If addressed on the service delivery grid on a student's educational plan, regular scheduled meetings will take place with an adjustment counselor. The SEALS (Self Esteem and Life Skills) curriculum is used by the school adjustment counselors during therapeutic educational groups for identified students. The SEALS curriculum addresses students' feelings, stress management, coping skills, positive thinking, substance abuse, and social skills. The school adjustment counselors deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers by referring students to Project Action, which provides support for anger management, substance abuse, and safe dating. Upon request, a list of local therapeutic providers is made available for students and families. The counselors have contact with the Department of Children and Families and outside service providers (with consent from parents) in order to work together and provide students with supports that are necessary to be successful inside and outside of school. The counselors at Westport High School use timely, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectation. Parental feedback is used to determine the effectiveness of services to support students and parents. Other assessments used by the counseling services staff include MCAS scores, SAT scores, common assessments, report cards, progress reports, and weekly progress reports for identified students. The wide variety of supports and services afforded to the WHS students and parents supports successful attainment of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations while meeting their personal, social, and emotional needs. (self-study, support staff, administration, teachers, parents, guidance staff, students)

Westport High School has a full-time school nurse that serves the entire student body and staff. She sees an average of 25-30 students per day in an open medical suite. This facility is adequate, but does not have an area for private consultation which often presents problems with handling student issues if there is more than one student in the suite. Unless it is an emergency, a student must have a pass from a teacher to see the nurse. The nurse has a system of confidential record keeping for individual student visits and has comprehensive lists of students' medical conditions, up-to-date immunization records, and all administered student medications that have physicians' orders on file. There is a standing blanket physician's order for students to be able to take Tylenol which also needs written parental approval. The nurse provides mandated screening for hearing and vision, Body Mass Index for grade 10 students, and postural screening for grade 9, notifying parents only if a screening indicates concern. The district website informs parents and the community of these services. Other services include providing a range of direct and preventative intervention services (such as flu vaccination), participating in the Student Concerns Meeting, assessing health issues, administering first aid and emergency care, monitoring

medications and treatments, and identifying students with emotional, psychological, and social problems. These referrals are handled in collaboration with adjustment counselors, teachers, administration, and parents. The nurse provides the district and the state with monthly statistical reports as well as accident reports. The nurse periodically publishes articles in the local "Villager" newspaper on health-related topics. The nurse actively serves on the school's Emergency Response Team and the Crisis Intervention Team. The nurse provides many of the necessary services to staff and students which allows all students to participate in 21<sup>st</sup> century learning on a daily basis. (self-study, district website, nurse, students, parents)

Westport High School's library/media services are well integrated into curriculum and instructional practices. The library/media center's mission statement is aligned with the school's core values and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The library/media center is centrally located and is accessible to students and faculty before, during, and after the school day. The media center is spacious and has room for two or even three classes of students using it simultaneously. Faculty can schedule research or computer use time for classes. Students may also use the library during their break time. Two carts of laptops (52) plus some desktops are available when the library is open and staffed. Problems arise when the library/media specialist is out of the building and there is no coverage resulting in no access to the computers. The school has just purchased a mobile cart containing 30 netbooks that can be used in classrooms. Faculty may schedule use of this cart through the library/media center. The certified library media specialist consistently collaborates with faculty and is very knowledgeable about the curriculum, ensuring print and non-print materials are available for student and faculty research. The library/media specialist works closely with the district technology director supporting technology integration and its availability to the high school community making her a technology leader and mentor for faculty and students. The library media center has a website that links to the state databases and a more in-depth presence on the media center's Moodle page that includes links to the online catalog, state databases, student resources for MLA documentation, research tips, and tools for evaluating web sources and is always available. The library/media specialist uses the library information literacy curriculum to instruct students individually and in class settings. For example, the library/media specialist has developed an MLA documentation template and rubric for works cited which helps her assess this portion of students' work. The media center provides a wide range of print, non-print, and web-based materials that support all aspects of the curriculum. Pleasure reading is current and age appropriate for all student reading levels. The library/media specialist uses both formal and informal assessment of library/media services. She collects statistics on individual student use, class use, computer use, and circulation. She also uses student and faculty surveys for feedback on how the library/media center is used. Under the library/media specialist's leadership, the media center has evolved from a strictly traditional library space to a learning commons approach to ensure the delivery of 21<sup>st</sup> century media center services which enhances learning opportunities for all students and faculty. (self-study, library/media specialist, teachers, students, student work, Endicott survey)

Westport High School provides support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners, and has an

adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff. There are six special education teachers, a reading specialist, three district liaisons, one English language learner district specialist, and eight paraprofessionals and aides. The support services staff collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff to ensure that all identified students, including special education, 504 and English language learners achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations by modifying content, adjusting delivery of instruction, administering assessments, and providing accommodations for identified learners. Other collaboration includes communication through weekly student progress reports, and scheduled formal and informal meetings. There are co-taught classes consisting of the collaborative efforts of the special education teachers, reading teacher, and the regular education teachers that provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students. Ongoing assessments use relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and to ensure that each student achieves the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. These assessments include MCAS scores, SAT scores, common assessments, report cards, progress reports, and weekly progress report for identified students. The special education teachers and staff in collaboration with the entire faculty provide all identified students with equitable opportunities to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations in an inclusive, school-wide culture. (self study, teachers, support staff, school leadership, guidance staff, special education staff,)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The Project Action program which offers students the additional academic, social, and emotional support to enable at-risk students to succeed in high school
2. The newly instituted advisory program which ensures that each student is able to connect with an adult faculty member and a small group of peers
3. The concerted effort by administration and faculty to communicate specific, timely feedback to parents
4. The proactive and comprehensive services provided by the school nurse
5. The number of support and counseling personnel available to students
6. The wide variety of support services available to students at WHS
7. The variety and accessibility of intervention services that support success for all students
8. The inclusive nature of all programs
9. The integration of library/media services in to curriculum and instructional practices
10. The comprehensive web of support services utilized to address the needs of all students

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Provide a student management program that will allow students and parents to access current information about student progress achievement, attendance, and course selection via a secure portal.
2. Provide space for confidential and private services within the counseling suite to provide a space where confidential dialog between the professional or other adult and a student is private.
3. Provide space for confidential and private services within the health suite to provide a space where confidential dialog between the nurse or other adult and a student is private.

# 7

## SUPPORT STANDARD

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### Community Resources for Learning

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*The achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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

At Westport High School there is insufficient funding from the community and the district's governing body to support a wide range of school programs and services, sufficient professional and support staff, ongoing professional development and curriculum revision, technology support, sufficient equipment, and instructional materials and supplies. Members of the community, that do not have a vested interest in the school, consistently vote down initiatives put forth by the administration to increase support. Westport High School through Westport Community Schools compiles a budget each year and disseminates this proposed budget to the townspeople. The town has a low tax rate and has voted against a Proposition 2 ½ override to increase funding. Budgets have recently been proposed to address the needs of the school and district and requests for overrides have been denied. Voters have not demonstrated an appreciation for the financial needs of Westport High School as it strives to achieve its 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations. Townspeople rely on comparing the budget to the foundation level rather than a comparison to the state-wide per pupil expenditure average. Westport allocates \$10,594 per pupil while the state average is \$13,055. Westport High School economizes with the available funding and regularly saves the town money, thereby re-investing in the town. Members of the school community actively seek grants through the Westport Educational Foundation and other sources. Present funding conditions create inconsistencies in the delivery of services and programs and impede long-term planning. The administration has stated that dependable funding from the community is a priority. It should be noted that the administration, teachers, and staff are mindful of the budgetary constraints and make up for this deficit with innovation and hard work. The administration has successfully been able to provide adequate and appropriate programming for special education students who previously were placed out-of-district. The return of these students has saved the district significant funds that have been re-invested into school programs and technology. Administrators have consistently worked to keep this investment in the community and have thus far been successful. The administration has also nurtured partnerships with Bristol Community College, UMASS Dartmouth, and Mass Maritime Academy. Teachers also play an active role in providing additional opportunities for students with internships at ArtWorks! in New Bedford, scholarships for students to travel to Portugal on a language immersion trip, and opportunities to conduct water testing in association with the Westport Watershed Alliance who provides transportation as well. Teachers also have been active in creating a school newspaper and have solicited advertisements and parent subscriptions to secure funds to defray cost. Teachers are credited with spending many additional hours after and before school to ensure quality programs and services. Teachers also use free academic programs on the web to provide academic enrichment and enhance content. Teachers work tirelessly to support their students and programs while their pay scale is the tenth lowest (out of 391) in the state. Bay Coast Bank provides a Credit for Life program in which students learn skills that will create financial independence. Due to the lack of adequate funding, students are charged for daily transportation to and from school, parking on campus, and extra-curricular activities including athletics and clubs. The staff has been creative with obtaining grants for academic programs and has prioritized these grants to support programs which enhance academic

achievement. The continuation of the present level of financial support from the community and the lack of dependable and predictable funding will result in diminished programming for students, the continued use of dated materials, and will prevent the school from effectively meeting its 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, budget documents, parent, administrators, teachers)

Westport High School sufficiently develops, plans, and funds programs to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant, maintains, catalogues, and replaces equipment as needed and adequately cleans the school on a daily basis. The head of maintenance and facilities, in conjunction with the superintendent and principal, plans facility needs and capital improvements taking into consideration projected future enrollment and needs. The head of maintenance is innovative, diligent, and proud of his concern for the facilities and their care. The head of maintenance noted recent energy audits that proved Westport High School to be 98 percent energy efficient, a level that most buildings built within the last five years would struggle to attain. The main part of Westport High School was built in the 1950s with some major renovation in 1973 and the science renovation in 2003. The head of maintenance is a licensed electrician and has accomplished most of this energy efficiency with creative and innovative solutions. He schedules all state, district, and town inspections. In the boiler room there was evidence of current certifications. Current staff members complete carpentry needs. One permanent day employee and three night employees provide general, daily custodial services. Most of the custodial work is accomplished at night. The daytime custodian was observed clearing blemishes on the wall and was observant and courteous of those walking in the halls. Maintenance and custodial staff complete a daily checklist of items to be accomplished during their shift. During the visit, the school was clean and all lights were functioning properly. An art teacher noted that, at times, the sink in the class clogs with clay and is promptly cleaned when maintenance is notified. The faculty expressed that they were satisfied with services, professionalism, and timeliness of the custodial staff and the cleanliness of the building. Forty-six percent of students indicated that furniture and equipment in their classrooms are not in good condition. The continual efforts of the custodial and maintenance staff, the diligence of the faculty, and the respect afforded by the students preserves the functionality of the dated facility as they work together to support current programming. (support staff, maintenance director, teachers, Endicott survey)

Westport High School has a long-range plan in place that addresses concerns involving issues with facilities, staffing, programs, and services. In spite of Westport High School's minimal funding from the community, various creative initiatives through grants and staff-led programs have contributed to sufficient long-range plans for programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, technology, and capital improvements. The Town of Westport has repeatedly denied the district's requests for adequate funding. Proposals for a Proposition 2 ½ override are consistently voted down. The funding for the long-range plan is budgeted from year to year. The School Climate Action Plan is developed for a three-year period and is currently organized for 2010-2013 and includes a state-approved, faculty-created, anti-bullying program. Funding for these programs comes from creative solicitation and grants. Reliance on supplemental funds limits the scope of offerings

to support the school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and to enhance teaching and learning. (self-study, budget, guidance, principal, staff interviews)

Building administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budgetary process. The faculty has input into developing priorities for the budget proposal and is allowed flexibility as they spend to meet the needs of student programs. The superintendent's office stated that the district's principals, including Westport High School's principal, have been cooperative and flexible when it comes to budget development. The administration has seen the benefits of short-term monetary sacrifices to attain long-term goals of the individual schools. Financial flexibility demonstrated by the principals has been necessary to implement a budget that maximizes minimal funding from the community. The building principal is expected to attend school committee meetings once a month and represent the school to the public. Teachers indicated that they have input into developing budgetary priorities. The administration regularly reviews the school improvement plan, the capital improvement plan, and the building improvement plan. Upon review of these plans decisions are based on the needs or deficiencies of their findings. According to the superintendent the strengths of the budgeting process are due to an effective administrative team and the weakness of the process stems from little community support. Building administrators' and teachers' involvement in the budgetary process ensures the optimum use of funds to support programs for student learning. (self-study, superintendent interview, District Improvement Plan 2011-2013)

Westport High School's site and plant adequately support the delivery of high quality school programs and services. Westport High School was built in the 1950s and has issues associated with a building of that age. The roof had several leaks that resulted in water damage. There was a \$1.2 million roof renovation project completed in the summer of 2012. There have been some ventilation and temperature control issues which include some missing screens on windows and uncontrollable thermostats resulting in inconsistent room temperatures. Loud air conditioners and heaters, particularly in the gym and library/media center, impact the students' and teachers' ability to hear. The guidance department lacks private offices and meeting space and offices are currently located on different floors of the school. The size of the cafeteria and the library/media center are sufficient for the current student population. There are no fire alarm sprinklers in the art room where the kiln is located. The school has only two telephone lines which are insufficient as the lines are often in use. For additional communication between staff, two-way radios are utilized by the nurse, administrators, and the community resource officer. The present exterior lighting does not provide sufficient outdoor illumination to provide personal safety on the grounds. Main door entrance security system is antiquated and the building currently lacks security cameras to maximize the school's safety and security efforts. In other aspects, the school has new white boards which have replaced chalkboards in all classrooms. All classrooms have wall-mounted projectors and 26 classrooms have been outfitted with Mimio boards. According to the Endicott survey 48 percent of the staff, 59 percent of the students, and 64 percent of parents reported that the school site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services. Continual upkeep and improvements to the physical plant are needed to insure student safety and an environment that is conducive to learning. (self-study, support staff, faculty, administration, Endicott survey)

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. The head of maintenance and facilities monitors and insures that the building meets all applicable laws and regulations. The head of maintenance schedules all inspections to be done by state, district, and town. The local fire department inspects and oversees fire drills to ensure regulations are being met. HVAC is maintained by in-house maintenance staff. EMS (Energy Management System) is maintained by an outside contractor. All records are located in the maintenance office and are up-to-date. Copies are forwarded to the state and town, as required. All parts of the building are handicap accessible. An elevator is available on the main floor. Special chairs are available to be used during emergencies in cases where using the stairway is a necessity. The school resource officer (SRO) works within the Westport School Department. The officer is responsible for all school levels. He spends the majority of his days at the middle and high school. The SRO remains on call for the elementary school. The SRO assists in cases relating to security and discipline when necessary. Diligence in maintaining proper documentation and having timely inspections ensures a safe environment that is conducive to learning. (maintenance interview, self-study, maintenance tour, students, teachers)

Professional staff actively attempts to 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. The Town of Westport maintains a general community school website and a Westport High School website. Both sites provide parents and families with a variety of timely information such as "Superintendent Coffee" to discuss important information pertaining to the school system. By providing four progress reports and four report cards, Westport High School encourages parents to be partners in their child's education. Westport High School provides opportunities such as evening parent conferences and other parent meetings with the principal, Grade 8 orientation night, and scholarship information night through guidance. The school continues to follow-up with notices requiring a parent's signature. The school continues to reach out to parents through established means of communication supporting the delivery of important information to improve school and home partnership. (self study, internet research, student handbook, staff interviews)

Westport High School develops productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning. Westport High School administration and staff continue to provide parents with communications through the use of a "one-call system" and school website. Parents have praised the staff and principal with their prompt response to emails and phone calls when communication is needed. Most teachers maintain regular contact with parents by email, telephone calls, scheduled meetings, and parent nights. The Endicott survey reports that 78 percent of students feel that parents have an opportunity to meet with school personnel. Sixty-three percent of parents believe that they have an effective partnership with the school. Staff members feel more need to reach out to parents. Westport High School currently has established a successful relationship with Bristol Community College (BCC) and University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth (UMASSD) allowing students to have dual enrollment in high school and college courses. The at-risk students may also enroll in credit recovery courses at BCC during the summer. Students

have also worked with the Watershed Alliance Group, whose mission leans heavily toward education. The high school has reached toward the community utilizing innovative programs such as ADVOCATS (community service program) and Project Action which is a grant-funded collaborative program between Westport and community providers to offer a variety of academic and social/emotional support for at-risk students. These programs and partnerships have developed connections to the community and support increased achievement for all students. (teachers, parents, self-study)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The administration, teachers, and staff members who maximize current resources and facilities with minimal financial support from the community
2. The efforts of the administration and teachers to successfully obtain grants that supplement the minimal budget
3. The remarkable upkeep of the dated facility due to the diligence of the maintenance and custodial staff and the respect afforded by the administration, teachers, and students for the building
4. The efforts to support teaching and learning through current technologies in the classrooms
5. The infrastructure and the district technology department maintain equipment and function in support of teaching and learning
6. The extraordinary efforts of the faculty and administration to provide quality programs with minimal budgetary support
7. The ingenuity of the head of maintenance and staff to provide a safe learning environment within budgetary constraints

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Provide adequate and dependable financial support to maintain and enhance existing programs at Westport High School.
2. Disseminate accurate and timely information about the scope of needs at Westport High School to engage the community and increase public support for budget proposals.
3. Renew the School Climate Action Plan that expires in 2013.
4. Install adequate school security systems.
5. Upgrade the student information management system to include a parent portal to enhance parent-school communication.
6. Implement a facilities maintenance plan to address building system inefficiencies and enhance teaching and learning spaces (HVAC – loud ventilation, etc.).

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

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

A school's initial/continued accreditation is based on satisfactory progress implementing valid recommendations of the visiting committee and others identified by the Commission as it monitors the school's progress and changes which occur at the school throughout the decennial cycle. To monitor the school's progress in the Follow-Up Program, the Commission requires that the principal of Westport 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 Commission in its notification letters to the school. School officials are expected to have completed or be in the final stages of completion of all valid visiting committee recommendations by the time the Five-Year Progress Report is submitted. The Commission may request additional Special Progress Reports if one or more of the Standards are not being met in a satisfactory manner or if additional information is needed on matters relating to evaluation report recommendations or substantive changes in the school.

To ensure that it has current information about the school, the Commission has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Commission within sixty days (60) of occurrence any substantive change which negatively impacts the school's adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The report of substantive change must describe the change itself and detail any impact which the change has had on the school's ability to meet CPSS Standards. The Commission's Substantive Change Policy is included in the Appendix on page 62. All other substantive changes should be included in the Two- and Five-Year Progress Reports and/or the Annual Report which is required of each member school to ensure that the Commission office has current statistical data on the school.

The Commission urges school officials to establish a formal follow-up program at once to review and implement all findings of the self-study and valid recommendations identified in the evaluation report. An outline of the Follow-Up Program is available in the Commission's *Accreditation Handbook* which was given to the school at the onset of the self-

study. Additional direction regarding suggested procedures and reporting requirements is provided at Follow-Up Seminars offered by Commission staff following the on-site visit.

In closing, the quality of the Westport High School Self-Study was excellent. In each Standard area, the school community candidly evaluated each of the focal concerns in terms of the quality indicators. In the process, strengths and needs were identified, and some planned and continuous improvements are already underway. The visiting committee wishes to express its appreciation to the students, parents, administrators, faculty members, and support staff of Westport High School for their hospitality and assistance during our visit to the school. The planning prior to the visit and the attention to details that supported the visiting team's daily work, inquiry, and personal comfort were much appreciated. Because of this preparation, planning, and support, the visiting committee enjoyed a truly professional experience and found the meetings and discussions to be both valuable and beneficial in the process of the evaluation.

**Appendix A: Roster of Team Members  
Westport High School**

**David A. Sweet, Chair**

Scituate Middle / High School  
N. Scituate, RI 02857

**Susan Wargo, Assistant Chair**

Millbury Memorial High School  
Millbury, MA 01527

**Meghan Armstrong**

Dedham High School  
Dedham, MA 02026

**C. Richard Canfield, Ed.D.**

Sandwich Public Schools  
Sandwich, MA 02537

**Mary Clare Casey**

Bourne High School  
Bourne, MA 02532

**Karissa Connors**

Hull High School  
Hull, MA 02045

**Mary Dolan**

Medway High School  
Medway, MA 02053

**Brenda Folsom**

Rockland High School  
Rockland, MA 02370

**David Hruskoci**

Shrewsbury High School  
Shrewsbury, MA 01545

**Steven Laredo**

Nantucket High School  
Nantucket MA 02554

**Steven E. Malley**

Melrose High School  
Melrose, MA 02176

**Shannon Osgood**

Newburyport High School  
Newburyport, MA 01950

**Timothy M. Rumberger**

Mashpee High School  
Mashpee, MA 02649

**Deborah Rutigliano**

Naugatuck High School  
Naugatuck, CT 06770

**Jennifer Sauriol**

Hamilton Wenham Regional High School  
South Hamilton, MA 01982

**James Wilkins**

Springfield Central High School  
Springfield, MA 01109

## **Appendix B:**

### ***NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES***

#### **Commission on Public Secondary Schools**

#### **SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY**

Principals of member schools must report to the Commission within sixty (60) days of occurrence any substantive change in the school which has negative impact on the school's ability to meet any of the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The report of substantive change must describe the change itself as well as detail the impact of the change on the quality of education in the school. Examples of substantive change areas include:

- available programs, including fine arts, practical arts, and student activities
- available facilities, including upkeep and maintenance
- level of funding
- school day and/or school year
- administrative structure, including the number of administrators and supervisors
- number of teachers and/or school counselors
- number of support staff
- student services
- educational media services and personnel
- student enrollment
- grades served by the school
- the student population that causes program or staffing modifications(s): e.g. the number of special needs students or vocational students or students with limited English proficiency
- identification by state as an underperforming school
- takeover by the state
- inordinate user fees

# **COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **COMMENDATIONS**

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

- The collaborative process used to develop the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations
- The implementation of new courses and programs to support student success that reflect the school's core values, beliefs, and expectations
- The caring and supportive culture of Westport High School
- The effort by faculty and staff members to review multiple sources of data while developing and reviewing the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
- The familiarity of teachers, students, and parents with the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations
- The school community's commitment to collaboration, communication, and a climate of respect and success for all students is actively reflected in the culture of the school

### **CURRICULUM**

- The purposefully designed curriculum that ensures that all students can practice and achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
- The adoption of the Understanding by Design (UbD) model of curriculum development
- The provision of training to teachers and administrators in the Understanding by Design (UbD) model of curriculum development
- The development and implementation of research-based, school-wide curriculum templates to guide curriculum in all subject areas
- The variety of curriculum focused on higher order thinking and authentic learning tasks
- The widespread use of data from school-wide common assessment activities to guide improvements to the school's written curriculum
- The development, assessment, and continual revision of the curriculum in the absence of formal department structure or common planning time

### **INSTRUCTION**

- The self-directed senior project and the many opportunities prior to the senior project that students have to present in formal and informal settings

- The individual attention given to students by teachers, administrators, and support personnel
- The consistent application of goal-directed routines throughout each classroom
- Instructional methods that are responsive to student needs
- Reimbursement at a current rate of 50 percent for workshops, courses, and conferences
- The practice of teachers shadowing students to reflect on curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- The teachers who both individually and collaboratively seek opportunities to improve instructional practices
- The variety of practices utilized by teachers including formative assessment to enhance instructional practices and improve student learning
- The use of strategies that support the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and emphasize problem-solving and higher order thinking, integrate technology, and engage students in cross-disciplinary thinking
- the quality and the quantity of feedback provided to teacher to ensure that instructional practices are aligned with the school's core values and beliefs about learning

## **ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT LEARNING**

- The use of data collected from common tasks that drives future decisions about instruction and assessments
- Targeted support provided to struggling students as a results of data analysis
- The consistent use of the school-wide rubrics by teachers
- The communication of school-wide rubric results as part of the regular report card
- The implementation of peer assessment and multiple opportunities for revision and student success
- The formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, implemented to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
- The communication of individual student progress to students and their families in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations in most areas through the use of the four school-wide rubrics
- The daily communication of learning goals to students
- The use journal prompts, activators, checking for understanding, tickets-to-leave, and peer evaluation to guide students toward learning

- The regular use of formative assessment to inform and adapt instruction for the purpose of improving student learning
- The review of standardized tests such as AP, SAT, and MCAS for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice

## **SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP**

- School-wide rubrics used across the school that create a common focus on 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills
- The consistent implementation of the citizenship rubric along with clearly defined consequences
- Heterogeneously grouped classes promoting school culture and maintaining high expectations for all students
- Implementation of the school-wide advisory program
- The school administration's careful and thoughtful implementation of the new state teacher evaluation system
- The planned and purposeful staff meetings focusing on improving teaching and learning
- Programs that support at-risk students meant to reduce disruptions to learning, help students focus, and address root causes for behavior issues

## **SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**

- School-wide rubric for citizenship used as a metric to gauge student behaviors supports a positive school culture and the accomplishment of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
- The consistent implementation of the citizenship rubric along with clearly defined consequences
- The return to a four-period, semester-based block schedule after careful consideration, research and analysis by teachers, administration, and students
- The heterogeneously grouped classes promoting school culture and maintaining high expectations for all students
- The implementation of the school-wide advisory program
- The school administration's careful and thoughtful implementation of the new state teacher evaluation system
- The planned and purposeful staff meetings focusing on improving teaching and learning
- The programs that support at-risk students meant to reduce disruptions to learning, help students focus, and address root causes for behavior issues

## **COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**

- The administration, teachers, and staff members who maximize current resources and facilities with minimal financial support from the community
- The efforts of the administration and teachers to successfully obtain grants that supplement the minimal budget
- The remarkable upkeep of the dated facility due to the diligence of the maintenance and custodial staff and the respect afforded by the administration, teachers, and students for the building
- The efforts to support teaching and learning through current technologies in the classrooms
- The infrastructure and the district technology department maintain equipment and function in support of teaching and learning
- The extraordinary efforts of the faculty and administration to provide quality programs with minimal budgetary support
- The ingenuity of the head of maintenance and staff to provide a safe learning environment within budgetary constraints

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations**

- Assure that all of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations are measurable using clearly stated criteria.
- Develop school-wide rubrics for using media and technology effectively and for demonstrating civic responsibility.
- Clarify the distinction, in measurable terms, between social expectations and civic expectations measured on the "citizenship rubric."
- Provide time for faculty to collaborate to support the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations of the school.

### **CURRICULUM**

- Provide the time and implement a formal structure to guide curriculum development and revision.
- Increase formal opportunities for teachers to collaborate within and between departments.

- Appropriately schedule opportunities to increase collaboration that supports vertical articulation of the curriculum Pre-K through 12.
- Complete the implementation of the school-wide curriculum templates to guide curriculum development in all disciplines.
- Expand the opportunities for all students to participate in co-curricular offerings.
- Increase the cross-disciplinary learning opportunities provided to students through the curriculum.
- Ensure the alignment of the written and the taught curriculum.
- Ensure that instructional materials, supplies, staffing, and the school's facility are sufficient to implement the curriculum and meet the needs of students.

## **INSTRUCTION**

- Provide more formal opportunities for intradepartmental collaboration.
- Include other forms of new instructional and presentational technology in all classrooms and provide training in its use.
- Increase opportunities for interdepartmental sharing of instructional strategies to foster commonality among disciplines.
- Implement a system for efficiently collecting and disseminating student achievement data.
- Implement a student information system that includes secure access for teachers, parents, and students.
- Implement formal opportunities for administration, teachers, and support personnel to share and analyze student assessment data from multiple sources.

## **ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT LEARNING**

- Implement a portal for parents to access real-time student information.
- Provide formal collaboration time for teachers to refine and revise common formative and summative assessments.
- Provide students with more specific, narrative, and individualized feedback when evaluating student work in conjunction with the use of rubrics.
- Regularly obtain data from alumni to guide the revision of curriculum, assessment, and instruction.

## **SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP**

- Continue to refine and implement the advisory program to meet the needs of the Westport High School community.
- Provide organized time for consistent, professional collaboration within and between departments to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices that meet the needs of all students.
- Continue to assess the effectiveness of the schedule to ensure that the daily block schedule supports the core values and the school's beliefs about learning.

## **SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**

- Provide a student management program that will allow students and parents to access current information about student progress achievement, attendance, and course selection via a secure portal.
- Provide space for confidential and private services within the health suite to provide a space where confidential dialog between the nurse or other adult and a student is private.

## **COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**

- Provide adequate and dependable financial support to maintain and enhance existing programs at Westport High School.
- Disseminate accurate and timely information about the scope of needs at Westport High School to engage the community and increase public support for budget proposals.
- Renew the School Climate Action Plan that expires in 2013.
- Install adequate school security systems.
- Upgrade the student information management system to include a parent portal to enhance parent-school communication.
- Implement a facilities maintenance plan to address building system inefficiencies and enhance teaching and learning spaces (HVAC – loud ventilation, etc.).