New England Association of School and Colleges, Inc.

Commission on Public Schools

Committee on Public Secondary Schools

Report of the Visiting Team for Connecticut River Academy

East Hartford, CT

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STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS

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

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

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

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

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

Teaching and Learning Standards

Core Values and Beliefs About Learning

Curriculum

Instruction

Assessment of and for Student Learning

Support Standards

School Culture and Leadership

School Resources for Learning

Community Resources for Learning

CORE VALUES, BELIEFS, AND LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

CURRICULUM

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

2. The curriculum is written in a common format that includes:
   - units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills
   - the school's 21st century learning expectations
   - instructional strategies
   - assessment practices that include the use of specific and measurable criteria for success, school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics.

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

4. There is clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum.

5. Effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation exist between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district.

6. Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are sufficient to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities.

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

INSTRUCTION

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

1. Teachers' instructional practices are continuously examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations.

2. Teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by:
   - personalizing instruction
   - engaging students in cross-disciplinary learning
   - engaging students as active and self-directed learners
   - emphasizing inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking
   - applying knowledge and skills to authentic tasks
   - engaging students in self-assessment and reflection
   - integrating technology.

3. Teachers adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by:
   - using formative assessment, especially during instructional time
   - strategically differentiating
   - purposefully organizing group learning activities
   - providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom.

4. Teachers, individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices by:
   - using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments
   - examining student work
   - using feedback from a variety of sources, including students, other teachers, supervisors, and parents
   - examining current research
   - engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice.

5. Teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices.

ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT LEARNING

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

1. The professional staff continuously employs a formal process to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations based on specific and measurable criteria for success, such as school-wide analytic rubrics

2. The school's professional staff communicates:
   ○ individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to students and their families
   ○ the school's progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to the school community.

3. Professional staff collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement.

4. Prior to each unit of study, teachers communicate to students the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed.

5. Prior to summative assessments, teachers provide students with specific and measurable criteria for success, such as corresponding rubrics, which define targeted high levels of achievement.

6. In each unit of study, teachers employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments.

7. Teachers collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments.

8. Teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work.

9. Teachers regularly use formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning.

10. Teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice, including all of the following:
    ○ student work
    ○ common course and common grade-level assessments
    ○ individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
    ○ standardized assessments
    ○ data from sending schools, receiving schools, and post-secondary institutions
    ○ survey data from current students and alumni.

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

core values and beliefs about learning.

SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Support Standard

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

1. The school community consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all.

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

3. There is a formal, on-going program(s) or process(es) through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

4. In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff:
   - engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning
   - use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices
   - dedicate formal time to implement professional development
   - apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

5. School leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning.

6. The organization of time supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students.

7. Student load and class size enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students.

8. The principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations.

9. Teachers, students, and parents are involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership.

10. Teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning.

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

12. The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school.

SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Support Standard

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

1. The school has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, that support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

2. The school provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services.

3. Support services staff use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student.

4. School counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
   - deliver a written, developmental program
   - meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling
   - engage in individual and group meetings with all students
   - deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers
   - use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

5. The school's health services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
   - provide preventative health services and direct intervention services
   - use an appropriate referral process
   - conduct ongoing student health assessments
   - use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

6. Library/media services are integrated into curriculum and instructional practices and have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
   - are actively engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum
   - provide a wide range of materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum
   - ensure that the facility is available and staffed for students and teachers before, during, and after school
   - are responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning
   - conduct ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

7. Support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners, have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
   - collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations
   - provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students

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

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Support Standard

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

1. The community and the district's governing body provide dependable funding for:

   - a wide range of school programs and services
   - sufficient professional and support staff
   - ongoing professional development and curriculum revision
   - a full range of technology support
   - sufficient equipment
   - sufficient instructional materials and supplies.

2. The school community develops, plans, and funds programs:

   - to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant
   - to properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment
   - to keep the school clean on a daily basis.

3. The community funds and the school implements a long-range plan that addresses:

   - programs and services
   - enrollment changes and staffing needs
   - facility needs
   - technology
   - capital improvements.

4. Faculty and building administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget.

5. The school site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services.

6. The school maintains documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations.

7. All professional staff actively engage parents and families as partners in each student's education and reach out specifically to those families who have been less connected with the school.

8. The school develops productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning.

School and Community Summary

School and Community Summary

The Connecticut River Academy (CTRA), a public magnet high school, opened its doors in a temporary building on the Goodwin College campus in East Hartford, Connecticut on August 28, 2010 to 146 scholars: 111 ninth graders and 35 tenth graders. Twenty-one different towns across Connecticut were represented during the first year, in full compliance with the Sheff desegregation mandate (72% minority and 28% white scholars). Now in the eighth year of operation and in its permanent facility on the Goodwin Campus, the school has grown to serve 486 scholars from approximately 42 towns, with about half of the scholars coming from Hartford (77% minority and 23% white scholars). Our enrollment is based on a lottery system that is conducted by the School Choice office in Hartford. The maximum number of scholars we are allowed to accept is determined by the state department of education. There is some attrition each year because some students choose to return to their home district. The last five years of enrollment for each graduating class has an average of about 110 students. The school moved into the beautiful facility in 2014 and, since then, established various programs with the many resources it provides. CTRA is operated by Goodwin College and the local education agency (LEA) is LEARN, a state resource education center (RESC) located about 50 miles away in Old Lyme, Connecticut. LEARN provides services to 21 districts which are mostly located in the shoreline area. CTRA is one of seven magnet schools LEARN works with, including two other high schools serving youth in the shoreline area. The total student population in the magnet schools that LEARN serves is 2,420.

CTRA's per-pupil expenditure is determined by the state's magnet school allocation process. Forced by the Supreme Court's mandatory order for a response to the situation identified in Sheff v. O'Neill, laws were enacted that offer both suburban and urban scholars the opportunity to attend schools of choice in an effort to ameliorate the racial isolation of all scholars. The amount each magnet school receives per pupil is determined by the location of the magnet school. This year, CTRA received $10,443 per pupil from the state budget and charges local districts $5,450 per pupil for a total of $15,893. The state average net current (October 2017) expenditures per pupil (NCEP) is $13,338. CTRA's low-income population as measured by the enrollment of the free and reduced meals program is around 70%.

CTRA uses an early college model that works to systematically create diverse learning experiences that integrate its theme of sustainability, which is defined as making decisions to ensure the well-being of all aspects of life, including nature, economy, and society. The CTRA sustainability theme includes two pathways: environmental studies and advanced manufacturing. Environmental studies provide scholars with opportunities to experience first-hand what environmental scientists and engineers actually do. Scholars learn about relevant environmental and social issues such as climate change and green energy in the school's state-of-the-art laboratories and on its very own research vessel. Scholars can also explore how current advancements in technology will shape the future of the planet with advanced manufacturing. Working hands-on with cutting-edge equipment and high-tech machineries such as 3-D printers and robotics, scholars gain experience in technologies including advanced manufacturing, engineering, and logistics. In addition to a full range of high school courses, scholars in grade 11-12 have the opportunity to earn up to 30 transferable college credits through the school's early college model. Unlike the scholars at many other high schools, CTRA's scholars get a head start on their college career while still in high school, all at no tuition cost. At CTRA, scholars are prepared academically and socially for college – laying an important foundation for their future success. Our scholars enjoy a curriculum filled with opportunities for hands-on learning and discovery – inside and outside the classroom. In 2017, 50% of the graduates attended four-year colleges, 38% attended two-year colleges, 3% joined the military and 9% started their careers. CTRA's four-year graduation rate for 2015-2016 is 90.8%; the state of Connecticut's rate is 87.4%.

CTRA believes that learning is best achieved when scholars employ Habits of Mind. When CTRA teaches for the Habits of Mind, educators are interested in how scholars behave when they do not know an answer. The curriculum at CTRA was designed with the Connecticut high school reform model in mind. CTRA requires scholars to earn 25 credits to graduate with most classes taught in heterogeneously mixed groups. We celebrate the achievements of our scholars in a formal school-wide community event in June. We also communicate ongoing accomplishments on our school website and in the morning announcements. Educators collaboratively

write curriculum, plan and implement lessons, and promote scholar-centered learning. A ninth-grade team structure was established in 2017-2018 and was found to be a successful method for supporting scholars transition to a new school and to the expectations of high school.

As a community of learners, CTRA operates under the assumption that relationships are the foundation for all education. Educators work to connect with each individual scholar and his or her family to provide personalized educational experiences. The collaborative effort among administrators, educators, and scholars reinforces the school values and promotes life-long learning. At CTRA, scholars are grouped into advisories with their peers for their four years at the school. These advisories are facilitated by staff members and work actively to promote the 21st century learning expectations of awareness, diversity, action, communication, and critical thinking. As scholars begin building relationships with the members of their advisory, they, in turn, broaden their understanding and awareness of the school and its unique culture. Our scholar population is 52% Hispanic, 24% Black or African American, 19% White, 3% Asian, and 2% other races/cultures. Our community partnerships are a constant focus to support our themes as well as the regional community needs. We have an advisory board that provides assistance in making connections in these areas and a career and internship coordinator who develops programs and opportunities for scholars to have successful learning experiences interacting with the community.

Beginning in October 2017 CTRA received a Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) federal grant. This will support the development of the new theme, advanced manufacturing. The five-year goals for the MSAP grant are aligned with the NEASC standards. They are DIVERSITY - Minority group and socioeconomic isolation will be reduced at the proposed magnet schools; MAGNET THEME - All students will receive high quality instruction that includes their school's systemic reforms and magnet themes in units and courses aligned with CCSS, NGSS, and State standards; STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT - (a) Student academic achievement will increase each year in ELA/literacy and math and science (for STEM schools) for all students, (b) The percentage of students from major ethnic and racial subgroups attaining level 3 or 4 on the state assessments will increase; PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT - Provide professional development related to improvement of curriculum, instruction, and magnet theme development and implementation; PARENT INVOLVEMENT - There will be an increase in parent participation at each magnet school. Over the last year CTRA has been transitioning its theme from early college and environmental studies to an early college magnet high school with a sustainability theme that has pathways of environmental studies and advanced manufacturing.

CTRA Institutional History

The history of our magnet standards traces back to the school's founding and work with the Magnet School Assistance Program (MSAP) grant that was awarded in 2010. The standards include demonstrating self and global awareness; demonstrating a respect for diversity; and demonstrating the impact of individual and social actions and decisions on the community of life. The founding principal, working with the magnet theme coaches, consultants, and an MSAP grant representative, utilized a wealth of research regarding environmentally and early college-themed schools and best practices to ensure preparedness for the 21st century. According the founding principal, two questions that drove the development of the school were "Who am I?" and "What am I doing here?" It was these two questions that shaped the foundation of what became Connecticut River Academy (CTRA). These ideas are grounded in place-based education research, a multidisciplinary approach to teaching and learning which helps scholars facilitate connections among themselves, the curriculum and the real world.

When the school was initiated, the principal and staff were working under the auspices of Goodwin College, Magnet Schools of America (MSA), and the Sheff Office in the State Department of Education. It was the principal's 30 years as an educator, the influence of these three groups, and research-based practices that formed the mold that CTRA would take. In 2010, Goodwin College was a burgeoning educational institution focused on career preparation and environmental science. Just a few years earlier, the college had moved to its current location along the banks of the Connecticut River and was making a name for itself both in terms of quality programming and rapid growth. Magnet Schools of America is a nonprofit organization focused on "providing leadership for high quality innovative instructional programs that promote choice, equity, diversity, and academic excellence for all scholars." Additionally, the Sheff Office, which stemmed from the landmark Connecticut Supreme Court case, *Sheff v. O'Neill* (1996), helps monitor the implementation of school choice with the ultimate goal of ensuring quality integrated education. Within this socio-political climate CTRA was founded,

and it was up to the institution's first principal and her team to make all of this a reality. Over the years the faculty worked collaboratively to coalesce the magnet standards and the school's values with the objectives of the various organizations that guided our origination.

One of the earliest proclamations from the school's first principal was that at Connecticut River Academy, "we do what's best for kids." It was this focus that made sure that equity drove our decisions as the faculty worked collaboratively to fulfill the school's mission and meet its first magnet themes: early college and environmental studies. This was especially important as we attracted scholars from over 40 towns that first year, with 50 percent hailing from Hartford, our capital city. The founding staff members knew that one way to do what was best for the scholars was to ensure a respect for diverse learners. In order to truly have a respect for diversity, the faculty had to be aware of several factors. First, and foremost, we had to understand that each person who enters our building each day has gifts that can and need to be developed. Second, we had to understand who our scholars were on academic, social, and personal levels, and we had to determine what a graduate should look like by the time he/she is ready to graduate. This was the basis of our quest to develop the magnet standards. On numerous occasions during professional development we brainstormed and honed our ideas to determine what our school was all about. The magnet theme coaches engaged in fact-finding missions and research into other successful magnet schools with similar themes. This phase of the process garnered many results, but two continue to drive the work we do at CTRA. First was Arthur L. Costa and Bena Kallick's work on the *Habits of Mind*, which equate to the soft skills that people need in order to be successful in college, career, and civic life. The other influential research was centered around Jaime Cloud's work from Cloud Institute for Sustainability Education. This institution promotes a "transformative learning process that equips scholars, teachers and school systems with the new knowledges and ways of thinking we need to achieve economic prosperity and responsible citizenship while restoring the health of the living systems upon which our lives depend." A quest for scholar empowerment through relationships and competency has always driven who we are as a school. We expect that scholars will graduate with the confidence and competence to make a positive impact on our environment. As a theoretical concept this is easy to understand, but the Connecticut River Academy had to define what this looks like in practice.

Throughout the first two years the magnet theme coaches, researched and visited several environmental and early college-themed schools throughout the region. One school in particular, Common Ground High School in New Haven, Connecticut, was an exemplar that embodied much of what CTRA aspired to achieve, especially in terms of the environmental and interdisciplinary approaches to curriculum. The early college model, however, was a little more precarious to develop as CTRA has a unique relationship with Goodwin College. There were, of course, quality programs from which to draw ideas. Some of these schools included Hartford Trinity College Magnet Academy and the middle college model at Quinebaug Middle College and LEARN's own Three Rivers Middle College. Each of these institutions promotes 21st century learning expectations and the development of their scholars to be successful at the college level, but there was not one school that attempted to explicitly combine elements of sustainability education with the tenets of an early college model. Additionally, CTRA had a responsibility to meet the expectations of Goodwin College. In 2012, when the founding principal sat down with a representative of the New England Association for Schools and Colleges, it was reinforced that CTRA had a duty to design programming that was equitable, meaning that decisions had to be made that put scholars at the center of the learning and met each individual where they were academically and socially. The bottom line became equity and making decisions based on what is best for scholars. To this day, this is the driving force behind our core values and beliefs. Again, the challenge was determining how best to meet this ideal with the time and resources allotted.

A vast majority of the process of moving from theory to practice played out in professional development meetings where educators worked collaboratively to research, define, and design implementation plans that promoted best practices. One of the earliest works shaping the school was Doug Lemov's *Teach Like a Champion*. In the school's infancy, much staff was inexperienced, and this resource provided insights into classroom management practices that are effective with a diverse group of scholars. Discussions of entry routines, not opting out, and cold calling drove professional development, and posters directing scholars to "SLANT." (Sit up, Listen, Ask and answer questions, Nod your head, and Track the speaker) and use seat signals lined the classroom walls. This was a good foundation but was clearly not enough to provide a quality, integrated education as intended at the school's founding. Other works that shaped the early development of the school's theory into practice were Steven Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective Students*, "Capturing Kids' Hearts" as developed by the Flippin

Group, and Hollingsworth's *Explicit Direct Instruction*. Understanding self, balancing and prioritizing responsibilities, relationships, and sound teaching practices were the focus of the first year as the staff worked huddled together in the one-hall modular building on 167 Riverside Drive. It was a new staff at a new school trying to make a dream a reality. Working cooperatively, the school forged a new path just as its parent organizations, LEARN and Goodwin College had done years prior. After the first year, however, they knew they could not do it alone.

One glaring problem was a lack of diversity in experience, namely that there were no veteran educators. In the second year, CT River Academy launched several initiatives to better serve the school's growing and diverse scholar body. The administration, working closely with the magnet theme coaches, brought on two curriculum consultants, enrolled the school in Kagan Cooperative Learning training, and enlisted the services of Calvin Terrell. Well-known and revered educators turned consultants worked closely with administration, magnet theme coaches, and educators to review and refine the magnet standards, environmental studies definition, vision, curriculum documents, essential questions, lesson goals, activities, and a whole host of assessment strategies and rubrics. Their role truly was to help the staff vertically integrate the curriculum to align with the mission and vision of the school through the magnet standards and sound approaches to teaching and learning. If a ship were a metaphor for the school, then these two consultants were the ballast that kept the ship steady as we navigated toward the horizon. Their decades of experience helped the educators meet the goals set by the administration and theme coaches. Working collaboratively the staff grappled with a variety of works by Robert J. Marzano and Rick Wormeli. Whereas Marzano's many works speak to a wide spectrum of curricular initiatives, Wormeli's *Fair isn't Always Equal* informed, and continues to inform, CTRA's inquiry into standards-based grading and defining the purpose and role of assessment in the 21st century classroom.

Coinciding with a strong alignment of assessments, goals, essential questions, and standards with the mission was a basic understanding of what an engaged classroom could look like. Basing her decision partly on her past experiences working with a CTRA educator in another district, the founding principal decided to train the entire staff in Kagan Cooperative Learning (KCL) structures. The motto for KCL is: "It is all about engagement." Dr. Spencer Kagan argues that engaged scholars experience greater growth in the classroom, experience a greater sense of socialization, and move more efficiently through the curriculum. In a classroom where the educator uses Kagan, the scholars first build relationships as a class and in purposefully diverse teams and then leverage those relationships to collaboratively engage with the curriculum. The research promoted in Kagan's book illustrates that using KCL actually builds a stronger school community and narrows the achievement gap while scholars grow in their mastery of the content. There are several keys to KCL, but one important piece, especially as it relates to providing a quality integrated education, is diverse grouping. Diversity in this sense is both social and academic, which is especially important because part of the mission of the school is to "break down racial, ethnic, economic, gender, and other social and academic barriers." Kagan contends that if scholars are active in learning and relationship building, then they will reach greater achievement and be better prepared for the complex challenges of college, career and civic life where diversity and collaboration are imperative.

Following a scholar field trip to a Youth Empowerment Summit (YES) for Diversity, CT River Academy contracted with Calvin Terrell. A letter to parents dated December 9, 2011, explained that Calvin was a recognized authority on diversity, bullying, and social justice issues. The letter noted that during an all-school assembly to be conducted by Terrell, the speaker would include "strong language and information of mature [justice-related] content." Over many school-wide and staff professional development experiences Calvin encouraged "scholars" and "educators" to "take arrows to the forehead" and employ "purity of motive" when addressing issues of prejudice, inequity, bullying, and injustice. Working with Calvin Terrell provided insights on how to demonstrate self and global awareness and a respect for diversity and to make a concerted effort to make a positive impact on our environment. Calvin helped CTRA to push the limits and define what scholars can do when given support from the educators when they worked as equals. Calvin asked the staff to reach the scholars where they were socially, culturally, and academically. Working with Calvin was emotional, provocative, healing, and restorative. The community worked through issues as a whole, and scholars were given a voice to express themselves in their own way.

Building upon our work with Calvin Terrell was a push to move to a more scholar-centered approach to teaching and learning. One such development opportunity occurred when a group of educators and scholars attended a full-day workshop on Choice Theory at Three Rivers Community College. Originated by William Glasser, choice

theory contends that it is the teachers' responsibility to help scholars envision a quality school existence and then make the proper choices to reach that ideal. One of the major implications for teaching and learning is that teachers should incorporate scholar voice and choice into their curriculum. At a school-wide level, this means that educators and administrators are including scholars' thoughts and opinions as a way to guide policy decisions. Following the Choice Theory workshop, the school engaged parents, scholars, educators, and community partners in developing the first iteration of the school's values. The list (cooperation, respect, relationships, diversity, sustainability and empathy) was reviewed by the district leadership team, including our school's administrators and one more value, mastery, was added because the scholar achievement data showed a need to prioritize scholar academic success.

ADDENDUM 1:

Approximately 87% of CTRA's 2018 graduates had a plan for post-secondary education (44% going to four-year college, 34% going to two-year college, 8% going into a career education or apprenticeship program, and 1% going into supported employment through a 5th year IEP transition program). This is an increase from 81% last year and meets our target of 85%. All of the 91 graduates met the all elements of the capstone experience at the proficient level, and all of the graduates with IEPs moved on according to an appropriate transition plan.

ADDENDUM 2:

The Connecticut Center for Advancement of Technology (CCAT) has a new subsidiary called Novus Insight, a non-profit company that will continue to provide CTRA with managed services and Information Technology leadership. Novus Insight's administrative offices are located in East Hartford, CT and will continue to have a presence at the service desk in the project center.

Related Files
- 2018-06-27-08:30_ctra-institutional-history.docx
- 2018-09-07-13:43_ctra-enrollment-oct-2013--oct-2017.xlsx

Core Values, Beliefs and Learning Expectations

Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

Connecticut River Academy is an early-college magnet school with a sustainability theme focused on environmental studies and advanced manufacturing.

Our Vision

CTRA graduates will use their gifts to contribute to a just and sustainable world.

Core Values

Awareness | Diversity | Action

Mission

The mission of the Connecticut River Academy is to:

- prepare its diverse student body for further educational opportunities, including the possible pursuit of careers in environmental or other sciences;
- break down racial, ethnic, economic, gender, and other social and academic barriers; and
- help its students to become well rounded, scientifically literate, and responsible 21st century citizens.

Six Beliefs about Learning

- Relationships are foundational to learning.
- Cooperative learning leads to increased cognitive engagement.
- All scholars can learn the Habits of Mind necessary to support success.
- All scholars can achieve at high levels.
- Learning happens best within a relevant context.
- Everyone in the community has ownership for learning.

Sustainability Definition

Making decisions to ensure the well-being of all life, including nature, economy, and society.

Advanced Manufacturing Definition

The use of innovative technologies and methods to contribute to a just and sustainable world.

- The use of innovative technologies and methods depends on skills embedded in the design process, Habits of Mind, critical thinking, problem solving and communication.

Magnet Standards: **CTRA Scholars will contribute to a just and sustainable world by:**

Magnet Standard 1: **demonstrating self- and global awareness**.

Version 2016 (revised from original created in 2012)

- Using self-reflection to identify personal values, interests, strengths and challenges
- Making plans and using strategies and resources to contribute to personal well-being, to the well-being of others and to well-being of the environment.
- Increasing global awareness to improve the efficacy and wisdom of decisions
- Using Habits of Mind to make choices that positively impact our future

Revision 2018

- Using self-reflection to identify personal values, interests, strengths, and challenges
- Making plans and using strategies, resources, and innovative technologies and ideas to contribute to the well-being of self, others, and the environment
- Increasing global awareness to improve the efficacy and sustainability of decisions
- Using Habits of Mind and the design process to make choices that will positively affect our future

Magnet Standard 2: **demonstrating a respect for the importance of diversity in the community of life.**

Version 2016 (revised from original created in 2012)

- Communicating an understanding of how diversity impacts our physical, social, and cultural environments
- Seeking diverse ideas and relationships
- Making collaborative and informed decisions

Revision 2018

- Communicating an understanding of how diversity affects our physical, social, economic, and cultural environments
- Seeking diverse, innovative ideas and relationships

- Making collaborative and informed decisions

Magnet Standard 3: **demonstrating the impact of individual and social actions and decisions on the community of life.**

Version 2016 (revised from original created in 2012)

- Communicating an understanding of how choices impact our environments
- Acting individually and collectively to positively impact our environments

Revision 2018

- Communicating an understanding of how choices affect environments
- Acting individually and collectively to positively affect our environments and increase community ownership for learning
- Employing innovative manufacturing methods and technologies that improve the conditions of life

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Related Files
- 2018-06-27-08:11_2018-revision-of-magnet-standards.docx

Introduction

Introduction

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

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

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

Teaching and Learning Standards

Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

Curriculum

Instruction

Assessment of and for Student Learning

Support of Teaching and Learning Standards

School Culture and Leadership

School Resources for Learning

Community Resources for Learning

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

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit - The School Self-Study

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

The self-study of CTRA extended over a period of 17 school months from March 2017 to August 2018. The visiting team was pleased to note that 15 students, 2 parents, and 10 community members joined the professional staff in the self study deliberations.

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

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

The Process Used by the Visiting Team

A visiting team of 12 members was assigned by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate CTRA. The visiting team members spent four days in East Hartford, reviewed the self-study documents which had been prepared for their examination, met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students and parents, shadowed students, visited classes, and interviewed teachers to determine the degree to which the school aligns with the Committee's Standards for Accreditation. Since the members of the visiting team represented classroom teachers, guidance counselors, library/media specialists, school administrators, and central office administrators, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of CTRA.

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

- - review of the school's self-study materials
- - 36 hours shadowing 11 students for a half day
- - a total of 12 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 40 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and the assessment of student learning
- - group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers

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

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

Standard 1 Indicator 1

Conclusions

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.

Since its inception in 2010 and over the last eight years, the Connecticut River Academy (CTRA) has deeply engaged in a dynamic, collaborative process informed by current research and best practices that have allowed this community of educators and scholars to identify and commit to their core values and beliefs about learning. Building on and refining the charter championed by a principal whose mantra was "We do what's best for kids," the faculty and staff have collaborated formally twice to reassess their core values and beliefs about learning. Initially citing resources by Marzano, Kagan, Covey, Glasser and Lemov, this community established a vision of what it meant to be a scholar at CTRA. In, addition, Calvin Terrell's model for community building played a key role in shaping this initial mission. While the initial seven values proved to be too cumbersome to practically apply to daily school life, the community reassessed these values to the three key terms they have come to own in recent years: awareness, diversity, and action. These terms now form the bedrock from which the curriculum is designed, instruction is delivered, and how scholars' work is beginning to be assessed. Moreover, in March 2018, the principal led a full-day of professional development that reaffirmed six key values of this school community. CTRA has deeply committed itself to its mission with ongoing analysis, revision, application, and illustration on its school's website and throughout the building.

The school's dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research-based best practices and the staff's commitment to their core values and beliefs about learning ensure that the school's core values and beliefs guide and inform teaching and learning at the school.

Sources of Evidence
- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- teachers
- students
- department leaders
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 1 Indicator 2

Conclusions

While in the beginning stages of measuring criteria for success using school-wide rubrics, CTRA has challenging and strong 21st century learning expectations demonstrated through its magnet standards that illustrate the school's vision and identify specific competencies within three broad categories.

These three categories (magnet standards) are "demonstrating self and globalawareness, demonstrating a respect for the importance ofdiversitywithin the community of life, and demonstrating the impact of individual and socialactionson the community of life." Within these three categories, the spirit of social and civic expectations clearly emerge in several bullet points or competencies that clarify each standard in terms of what scholars should know and be able to do. Two expectations within these three broad categories, communicating and thinking critically, are defined more carefully by the faculty and include measurable criteria for success with these school-wide analytic rubrics that include targeted levels of achievement. These two analytic rubrics are used in every class, twice per year giving scholars over 30 opportunities to create work defined by specific measurable criteria for success in each grade. As they apply these rubrics in the classroom twice each year, the faculty monitors scholars growth over time toward meeting the targeted levels of achievement seen therein. Much of this scholar work is digitally stored in each scholar's Google Classroom over the four years and become part of the CTRA capstone presentation in their senior year. As demonstrated by each scholar as an individual during their capstone presentation to a panel of judges, the constructs of awareness, diversity, and action are illustrated as part of a requirement for graduation. When viewed through a magnet school charter, the expectations for learning at CTRA are clear, concise, and en route to being assessed simultaneously through school-wide rubrics and individual scholar illustrations of the meaning of the mission to each scholar.

When data associated with the application of the school-wide rubrics as well as the perceived illustration of the core values and beliefs of each scholar during their capstone presentation is gathered and analyzed by the judges, members of the community will be able to understand the effectiveness of the application of the core values and beliefs for CTRA.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- panel presentation
- teachers
- students
- department leaders
- school leadership

Standard 1 Indicator 3

Conclusions

The core values and beliefs about learning as outlined in the magnet standards and illustrated through the awareness, diversity, and action mantra at CTRA are deeply embedded in the school's culture and pervasively influence curriculum, instruction, and much of the assessment of and for learning. While the influence of the Goodwin College priorities is evident, almost all policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations, at the site level, spring from the CTRA core values and beliefs.

For example, referenced in the curriculum, the key components of the school's mission form the backdrop of the common template for all classes. This, in turn, leads to daily class activities tethered to these core values that can be seen each day as well as during large events such as magnet theme days and capstone presentations. Teachers reference the school's mission and objectives for the day regularly during instruction, and most scholars can articulate these expectations when asked. "Please do now" activities at the start of almost every class illustrate the action component of the mission. Moreover, scholar work is assessed specifically through two school-wide rubrics with respect to critical thinking and communication, again a reflection of the school's key learning expectations. Scholar work like this is digitally stored over time by each scholar. Planned grade 9-11 scholar-led conferences will engage families with the school's mission. The four-year CTRA experience culminates in a capstone project whereby each scholar defends the meaning of awareness, diversity, and action to them to a panel of judges. Finally, with over 80 percent of the faculty and parents strongly agreeing that the school's mission is actively reflected in the culture, it is clear the scholar work demonstrates the school's key themes of awareness, diversity, and action to the community at large.

The varied and ongoing efforts to view the curriculum, instruction, and assessment through the lens of the CTRA core values and mission will do much to successfully influence the learning experience in the near and distant future.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- teachers
- students
- school board
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 1 Indicator 4

Conclusions

The Connecticut River Academy has recently reviewed and revised its core values, beliefs, and learning expectations despite the fact the school has been in existence for under a decade.

As part of the initial application, the CTRA community clearly established and embedded its school's mission, core values, and beliefs into the school culture as a magnet school. Several times since the school has opened, the core values and beliefs have been reaffirmed with the latest commitment to awareness, diversity, and action clearly apparent in daily school life. Using research from at least a dozen sources since 2010, the school's core values, belief, and expectations for learning have been reviewed, most recently by the principal in March 2018. With each iteration over the last eight years, the focal constructs of the school's core values have sharpened from seven to three: awareness, diversity, and action. This simplification has made the school's vision more accessible and easily referenced by the population in daily school activities. Most recently, the school's priority as part of its relationship to Goodwin College has been focused yet again toward scholar work on advanced manufacturing.While the commitment to the current core values and beliefs is to stabilize at CTRA in the near future, clearly this culture, its leadership, faculty, and support staff are fully capable of additional revisions and reaffirmations going forward as they adapt their vision for the school, the community, and the priorities of their scholars.

Sources of Evidence
- panel presentation
- teachers
- students
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 1 Commendations

Commendation

The engaging process in which the CTRA learning community developed and established its core values and beliefs

Commendation

The reaffirmation of the school's mission by the principal in March 2018

Commendation

The pervasive intellectual and emotional commitment of the leadership, teachers, support staff, scholars, and parents to the school's core values and beliefs

Commendation

The process by which the faculty established and clarified their understanding of the communication and critical thinking rubrics to scholar work school-wide

Commendation

The application of the communication and critical thinking rubrics twice a year to all scholars in all classes

Commendation

The vision of the school's core values and beliefs to have each scholar illustrate the meaning of awareness, diversity, and action in ways that are important to them during the capstone presentation

Commendation

The pervasive influence of the core values and mission throughout daily school life for the students, teacher, and parents

Commendation

The high degree to which this culture values the school's core values, mission, and expectations

Commendation

The specific student-led events such as scholar-led parent conferences, magnet theme day, and capstone presentations that illustrate the school's mission and core values to the culture at-large

Commendation

The initial development, subsequent reviews, and recent reaffirmation of the school's mission, core values, and beliefs that have led to a deep and meaningful understanding of the application of that mission to school life at CTRA

Standard 1 Recommendations

Recommendation

Gather and analyze data associated with the school-wide rubrics on critical thinking and communication over time to determine their efficacy toward meeting the school's learning expectation

Recommendation

Gather and analyze the perceived effectiveness of each scholar's ability to illustrate the meaning of awareness, diversity, and action to them during the capstone presentation

Recommendation

Gather and analyze data on the perceived effectiveness of scholar-led conferences by the participants en route to modifying this event as the data suggests

Recommendation

Develop and implement specific and measurable criteria for success to provide a clear understanding of how the 21st century learning expectations can be achieved

Standard 2 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The curricula at CTRA are purposefully designed to ensure that all scholars practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Furthermore, the school has begun developing a process of revising and creating initiatives that ensure adherence to the school's civic and social expectations.

CTRA is committed to making sure all students have access to all aspects of the curriculum. The school has a document which identifies the 21st century learning expectations, magnet standards, and Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and has allocated the responsibility for specific school-wide 21st century learning expectations to individual departments. The curricula are specifically designed around a set of magnet standards that articulate the school's civic and social expectations around awareness, diversity, and action. Individual teachers are clear on what learning expectations they are responsible for teaching in course curriculum, and all teachers are required to assess the ability to communicate effectively and the ability to think critically. Additionally, these learning expectations are somewhat reflected in the departmental scoring guides and common assessments. Of the written curricula, all explicitly reference the 21st century learning expectations in the documents.Sixty-seven percent of teachers believe that the school's formal curriculum design ensures that all scholars practice and achieve all the school's learning expectations, and 96 percent of scholars considered teacher explanations of the school's expectations to be thorough. However, only 22 percent of scholars felt "very prepared" for success at Goodwin College, noting more support needed in meeting the school-wide expectations. The school embraces a constant state of reflection and incorporates additional opportunities for practice and development of the expectations with constant revisions added into curriculum documents.When the curricula have been fully revised to implement all learning expectations, along with civic and social expectations, all scholars will have consistent opportunities to practice and master the 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

Standard 2 Indicator 2

Conclusions

A vast majority of CTRA's curriculum is written in a common format that includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, skills, instructional strategies, and assessment practices. The Understanding by Design model was used by CTRA to develop the key components of the curriculum template. Each department's documents include detailed units of study, both CCSS and magnet standards, essential questions, concepts, content, skills, the school's learning expectations, and instructional strategies, but the use of specific and measurable criteria for success are not linked to many corresponding assessments. Additionally, strategies for differentiation between levels is inconsistent throughout the curriculum documents. Approximately 70 percent of staff agree or strongly agree that "There is a common, formal, curriculum template that is used in all subject areas." Many departments are comprehensive in their inclusion of instructional strategies and assessment practices, while other departments are still engaged in the process of solidifying and revising their curricula. Instructional strategies include Kagan cooperative learning structures, readings other than textbooks, magnet standards integration and assessment, Costa and Kallick's Productive Habits of Minds, and the school's academic expectations. Explicitly identified common assessments and their corresponding specific school-wide criteria for success used in the scoring of these assessments are absent from many documents. Course-specific and department-wide rubrics are included in some of the curricula. In previous years, teachers and administrators identified that the work of writing and revising curricula to teaching and assessment is difficult because of time and scheduling constraints, however, the use of early release time on Fridays has allowed for more time to focus on completing this process. Having written curriculum in most content areas ensures that all scholars have opportunities to achieve the schools 21st century learning expectations. When specific and measurable criteria for success are identified and used consistently among all departments for curriculum formatting, differentiation, and assessment practices, scholars and educators will be provided with a clear understanding of how the school's 21st century learning expectations can be achieved.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- teachers
- department leaders
- Endicott survey

Standard 2 Indicator 3

Conclusions

The majority of the written CTRA curriculum encourages scholars to pursue a depth of understanding and application of knowledge through inquiry and problem solving, some higher order thinking in many courses and levels, authentic learning opportunities in and out of school, and informed and ethical use of technology. Approximately 85 percent of parents, 70 percent of scholars, and 83 percent of staff members agree that the curriculum at CTRA emphasizes depth of understanding and higher order thinking. While the emphasis on depth of knowledge is apparent in curriculum documents, it is not always apparent in classroom instruction and scholars' work. Each teacher at CTRA is required to use the school-wide critical thinking rubric at least once per semester in each class. Many scholars are provided with opportunities for practicing inquiry and problem solving, but higher order thinking questioning and discourse is not always present. This expectation for teaching and learning is represented in existing curriculum documents but inconsistently displayed during instruction. While the magnet themes are integrated across most content areas, cross-disciplinary units of study have just begun to take form. The 9th grade team receives professional development on the development of cross-curricular lessons and activities, but other grade level teams have not been given the opportunity to develop these lessons. This remains a focus during curriculum revision between and among departments. Approximately 83 percent of teachers indicate that the curriculum emphasizes the authentic application of knowledge and skills. Across multiple disciplines and levels in a variety of courses, there is evidence that scholars are provided with opportunities for authentic learning both in and out of school. Written curriculum in Community Development, Advanced Sustainability Research and Action, Food Systems, The Math of Finance, and Urban Studies provide scholars with such opportunities, as well as the multitude of courses offered at Goodwin College campus. Scholars currently can be dual enrolled at Goodwin College and earn up to 36 college credits. CTRA offers numerous authentic learning opportunities out of school including field trips for a variety of classes, interactions with individuals at the local, state, and national level, and magnet theme days. These days allow scholars the opportunity to give back to their community through community service. Approximately 78 percent of scholars agree that CTRA "provides opportunities for learning off campus." It is evident that, although some authentic learning opportunities exist in and out of the school building, there is a need for a more formalized structure to inform and support students in their job shadowing experiences. Seventy percent of staff agrees that the curricula at CTRA promotes the effective and ethical use of technology, and 82 percent of scholars believe they are knowledgeable about the ethical use of technology. A number of systems help encourage this use such as cell phone, computer, email, and Internet use policies as well as the one-to-one laptop program. The technology acceptable use policy is written in the scholar handbook and all scholars and parents/guardians must sign an acknowledgement prior to being able to use any technology and computers at CTRA. While the school implements an acceptable use policy and works closely with outside resources such as "Welcome To Reality" to support parents and scholars with the use of technology, CTRA does not have a specific curriculum or formal opportunity for incoming scholars to be instructed in the ethical use of their technology. When there are consistent and widespread opportunities for scholars to apply inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking skills, to experience cross-curricular and authentic learning opportunities, and to demonstrate the informed and ethical use of technology, scholars will be able to demonstrate a depth of understanding and application of knowledge that assist them in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

CTRA has access to a research vessel and boat dock as a unique resource to incorporate the school-wide theme of environmental sciences and sustainability (is this an authentic learning opportunity that should be mentioned in Indicator 3).

Sources of Evidence
- classroom observations
- self-study

- student work
- teachers
- students
- Endicott survey

Standard 2 Indicator 4

Conclusions

There is clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum. There are two curriculum consultants at CTRA who have overseen the curriculum process, working closely with teachers and the leadership team to ensure alignment between the written and taught curriculum. In content areas where the curriculum is written, 76 percent of the staff agrees that the written and taught curricula are aligned. However, not every course has a complete written curriculum due to revision and transferring of curriculum from an old to a new template as well as all curriculum documents being constantly edited. Curriculum documents include complete sets of suggested activities to help teachers achieve the goals of each lesson. Teachers may utilize these activities in class and/or add to the activities, but the goals of the lessons remain the same to ensure alignment. Formal review of alignment between written and taught curriculum is in place with the administrative team and curriculum consultants observing lessons and collaborating on curriculum development and revisions. While each department has content- and unit-specific assessments and assured experiences that all scholars are required to complete, it is not apparent that departments analyze data collected from common assessments to measure scholar progress toward mastery of the skills and concepts identified in the curriculum guides. Additionally, it is not apparent that staff members utilize results from these assessments to drive curriculum revisions on a consistent basis. Across the school, many teachers post essential questions, learning goals, agendas, and "please do nows" taken directly from the written curriculum. Teachers formally and informally collaborate and share curriculum resources in support of the written curriculum and other resources for courses where a written curriculum does not yet exist. Several departments share lesson plans and activities in order to ensure curriculum alignment. Additionally, Friday early release time is allocated for teachers to collaborate both departmentally and across disciplines to develop, review, and revise curriculum documents. As the result of the high school's written and taught curriculum being fully aligned, scholars are provided with equitable opportunities for practicing and mastering CTRA's 21st century learning expectations. When departments analyze data collected from common assessments that measure mastery of skills and concepts in order to drive curriculum revision, scholars will be able to demonstrate knowledge that will assist them in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence
- classroom observations
- self-study
- teachers
- students
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- Endicott survey

Standard 2 Indicator 5

Conclusions

While curricular coordination and vertical articulation are evident within most departments it does not exist uniformly between content areas. Curriculum institutes and monthly department meetings afford opportunities for teachers to discuss vertical alignment. Both the social studies department and the English departments implement a clear order of vertical alignment through their use of rubrics for content-specific assessments. Many courses offered at the school depend upon the successful completion of prerequisites thus implicitly ensuring vertical alignments for certain courses offered at the school. Since opportunities for cross-interdisciplinary learning are just starting to take form, the horizontal articulation between content areas are minimal. Currently, the 9th grade team receives professional development on the development of cross-curricular lessons and activities, but other grade level teams have not been given the opportunity to develop these lessons. This remains a focus during curriculum revision between and among departments. However, scholars have the opportunity to complete a capstone project through which they can explore an area of study and demonstrate personal growth in the core values of the school. Advisory sessions throughout the year consistently provide opportunities for scholars to align capstone projects within the community and illustrate their growth. As a result of receiving students from as many as 50 different sending towns, it is not practical for the school to have vertical alignment with sending schools. However, they do connect with the 8th grade teachers at the Two Rivers Magnet Middle School since some scholars will enter the 9th grade at CTRA. However, the school systematically is a sending school for Goodwin College. Thirty-four percent of CTRA juniors and seniors take at least one college course at Goodwin. Regular meetings are held between Goodwin faculty and CTRA in order to ensure the vertical alignment of the curriculum. When effective curriculum coordination and vertical articulation exist between and among all academic areas within the school, scholars will be able to meet the 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- teachers
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

Standard 2 Indicator 6

Conclusions

Instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and resources of the library media center are sufficient to fully implement the curriculum. The average class size at CTRA is 16 scholars. However, class sizes in science, Spanish 2, SAT prep, Physics, Statistics, English 9, and English 11 are frequently larger with over 20 scholars. CTRA has access to a research vessel and boat dock as a unique resource to incorporate the school-wide theme of environmental sciences and sustainability. Specific courses and curricula have also been developed and designed to incorporate the school's theme into daily instruction. The science department lacks some instructional space due to re-allocation of some science classrooms to special education to accommodate the increasing special education population. Staff members cite the school's technology and infrastructure as pervasively sufficient to support teachers and scholars in using technology consistently and effectively. CTRA's one-to-one laptop program and computer lab provide scholars with opportunities to access the necessary technological applications needed to meet the school's learning expectations. Each classroom is equipped with a SMARTBoard providing educators the opportunities to sufficiently implement the technology components written in the curriculum. CTRA's scholar population is comprised of scholars from up to 50 different sending schools, thus limiting the opportunities for students co-curricular programs outside of school hours due to lack of transportation. The school recognizes this obstacle and has instituted a FLEX period in order to provide scholars the opportunities to discover and explore their interests and passions. Through the use of advisory sessions scholars identify their areas of interests and have opportunities to explore them in depth. As a result of adequate instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and resources, educators are able to fully implement the curriculum. When staffing levels are sufficient to fully and comprehensively implement the curriculum in all academic disciplines, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities, scholars will be able to demonstrate achievement of the school's 21st century expectations for student learning.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

Standard 2 Indicator 7

Conclusions

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 some assessment results and current research. Currently, there are approximately 70 educators that instruct the 463 scholars enrolled at CTRA with an average classroom size of 16 students. CTRA embraces a culture of continuous curriculum review and improvement and has allocated time during the school day to ensure curriculum is reviewed and revised on a regular basis. School leadership has focused on the immediate needs of the school building, thus allocating more time for curriculum revisions. The two curriculum consultants, hired in the second year of the school's operation, support staff with the collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum. A common curriculum template has been developed for all departments to utilize when writing their curriculum that includes a variety of standards, opportunities for depth of understanding, clear learning outcomes, and instructional strategies. Approximately 59 percent of teachers agree that they have sufficient time to be engaged in formal curriculum evaluation, review, and revision work, and 72 percent of staff reports that they are directly involved in curricular work. In previous years, the lack of common planning time to engage in curriculum work was a concern among staff. School leadership continues to address this concern by providing opportunities, such as early release days, for educators to engage in the curriculum review and revision process. Budgetary provisions are allocated for curriculum development, evaluation, and revision during the school year and in the summer. Additionally, school leadership, along with the curriculum consultants, offer three-to-five-day curriculum institutes at the end of every school year with a certain number of days required for all teachers. Teachers have the option to attend additional days during the curriculum institute paid at LEARN's hourly rate. The yearly curriculum institute has ranged from $20,000 to $30,000 depending on the number of days allocated and a number of educators who choose to participate. Scholar performance data has some influence on the development, evaluation, or revision of the curricula. Teachers are required to assess scholars through benchmark assessments, assured experiences, and common formative assessments over the course of the school year in addition to the NWEA, PSAT, and SAT assessments. Administration of the NWEA has been inconsistent and data is not frequently shared efficiently with educators. In response to SAT data, CTRA contracted with consultants to assist the school in evaluating SAT data. Many departments have begun incorporating SAT strategies into their instructional practices and curriculum documents. Educators at CTRA have received a protocol to utilize data from common formative assessments, but it is not evident that results from these assessments are driving curriculum decisions. As a result of adequate personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum, the school is able to maintain a living curriculum document. When teachers begin to use assessment results and current research to inform curriculum decisions, scholars' abilities to practice and achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations will be enhanced.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- teachers
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 2 Commendations

Commendation

The living curriculum document that is responsive to the needs of the scholars

Commendation

The written curriculum format that includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, skills, instructional strategies, assessment practices, and a variety of standards

Commendation

The wide variety of opportunities for scholars to participate in authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school

Commendation

The collaboration between educators that results in the implementation of CTRA's assured assessment experiences

Commendation

The authentic tasks that highlight communication and critical thinking

Commendation

The Flex period that provides scholars the opportunities to discover and explore their interests

Commendation

The time allocated for teachers to collaborate on curriculum evaluation and revision

Commendation

The partnerships with Goodwin College to offer courses that allow scholars to receive college credit

Commendation

The course specific and departmental rubrics for specific content areas

Commendation

The ability to continuously revise the curriculum to address the needs of the student population

The availability of instructional materials, technology and supplies to fully implement the curriculum

Standard 2 Recommendations

Recommendation

Provide a structured time to allow for collaboration and reflection regarding departmental responsibility for incorporating the school's 21st century learning expectations into department curriculum

Recommendation

Create and implement a plan to fully revise existing curricula and create curriculum documents for courses where they do not exist

Recommendation

Develop and implement a process for cross-disciplinary planning and learning

Recommendation

Create more opportunities for inquiry-based lessons and higher order thinking in all curricula

Recommendation

Develop and implement a process to inform curriculum decisions using assessment data

Recommendation

Provide time and resources for curricular coordination and horizontal articulation between and among all academic areas within the school

Standard 3 Indicator 1

Conclusions

CTRA educator's instructional practices are continuously examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations. CTRA's core values are embedded in the school's curriculum and evident throughout instructional practices. In every classroom, teachers visually display essential questions, agenda items, learning objectives, and the school's magnet standards which are at the heart of the school's core values and beliefs. Educators throughout the school consistently reference those items during instruction providing a clear indication the faculty reflects how their individual lesson ensures connection to the schools' core values and beliefs. According to results of the Endicott survey, 72 percent of faculty and 77 percent of parents agree that instructional practices personalize instruction and support scholars' achievement of the school's learning expectations. Every graduating scholar must successfully complete and orally present a capstone portfolio requiring the scholar to reflect on his or her learning. One major component of that reflection connects to the school's mantra of awareness, diversity, and action. While CTRA's core values are embedded in the school's instruction, CTRA continues to develop a clear and unified picture of what 21st century learning expectations look like at the instructional level. As a result of the pervasive inclusion of core values and beliefs at the instructional level, the school has a consistent message to drive instruction which will only be enhanced as all stakeholders solidify their understanding of 21st century learning expectations at CTRA.

Sources of Evidence
- classroom observations
- teacher interview
- Endicott survey

Standard 3 Indicator 2

Conclusions

CTRA implements instructional practices that support the achievement of 21st century learning expectations by offering multiple opportunities to engage scholars as active and self-directed learners, apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks, engage scholars in self-assessment and reflection, integrate technology, and engage scholars in cross-disciplinary learning in instructional practices for personalized instruction. While instructional practices frequently emphasize inquiry and problem solving, higher order thinking in instructional practice is inconsistent. Scholars are required to apply their knowledge and skills to many authentic tasks over their CTRA career including scholar-led conferences, magnet theme days, and a capstone project which is a culmination of all their skills and knowledge applied to a self-selected/self-guided research paper, a fifteen-hour mentorship in a field of interest, and, finally, a fifteen minute presentation to a panel of judges, consisting of educators, alumni, and community guests. This entire experience is self-guided learning with the educator acting only as a facilitator. CTRA scholars do not experience self-directed learning only in their capstone project, rather it is the cornerstone of many of the teaching strategies and instruction utilized throughout the school. Scholars are also given opportunities for self-reflection and/or self-evaluation in curricular units, across all subject areas, both formally and informally. For example, advisory groups have scholars reflect upon the development of their Habits of Mind, complete the college and career readiness rubric which is used, in part, to determine a scholar's readiness for high level courses. Additionally, at the midpoint of quarter two and midpoint of quarter four, scholars in each class are asked to reflect on their Habits of Mind which is coupled with their teacher's report on the Habit of Mind progress on interim report card comments. Self-reflection is also a part of magnet theme days. Educators have many opportunities to access and use a variety of technology in the classroom. All teachers have access to Google Classroom, SMARTBoards, 1:1 devices, and technological tools like 3D printers and a research vessel to enhance scholar learning. CTRA believes that, for a scholar to be both self and globally aware, he or she must experience how learning in one area translates to other subjects. The magnet standards of awareness, diversity, and action, as well as the focus of CTRA on the environment and its sustainability serve as an overarching way to access the concept of cross-disciplinary connections. While teachers regularly work to achieve the above, consistent and widespread use of instructional units that help scholars study topics that transcend more than one content area and make connections across content areas is inconsistent. However, another method to utilize and ensure school-wide cross-disciplinary instruction is through the implementation of magnet theme days. Personalized instruction can be seen throughout CTRA with many educators, departments and school-wide initiatives. Across the school, educators strive to create environments that foster academic growth through individualized interventions and supports like extended learning, office hours, and personalized informal and formal goal-setting meetings. Scholars utilize educators' office hours on at least a weekly basis to solicit specific, personalized instruction with regard to assignments. Scholars note that many classes, aside from English, such as deliberation and Spanish, offer opportunities for scholars to select topics based on personal interest and skill level, which creates intrinsic motivation in scholars to achieve. School-wide initiatives like continued professional development on differentiated instruction also provide teachers with the knowledge and tools to create personalized instruction within their lessons. The Connecticut River Academy exemplifies personalized instruction most notably through establishing a positive rapport with scholars in day-to-day conversations with scholars in circle time and advisory activities to name a few. Scholars are expected to engage in hands-on, project-based learning in the majority of their classes throughout the year. While not every lesson can be entirely hands-on or project-based, teachers at CTRA attempt to ensure scholars take an active role in learning through a variety of different instructional strategies like pair and share, instructional and technology games that assess understanding, and Socratic seminars. CTRA emphasizes inquiry and problem solving across all departments. In every classroom on the dashboard, there are essential questions that curriculum developers and coaches work to ensure alignment with a curriculum that is driven in many cases to included inquiry and problem solving activities and instructional approaches that marry to the school's themes and habits of mind. Specifically, courses like English 11 provide scholars with opportunities to gather data on their family histories and to inquire into diverse points of view for their research papers in their American dream unit are examples of a multitude of choices across disciplines. Although inquiry and problem solving are an integral part of most curriculum documents because of the detailed and prescribed pacing guides, teachers may not have sufficient time on a

unit/theme/ topic/essential question to allow scholars to understand the concepts or information in depth before moving to the next part of the established curriculum. However, the supports in place for scholars to receive extra help and time in a personalized manner coupled with the communication between educators and departments allows for the chance for scholar mastery. The staff has received professional development in past years on Norman Webb's Depth of Knowledge for categorizing levels of complexity and for including high order thinking within their daily instruction and curriculum documents. Despite this training, a common understanding of what rigor and higher order thinking looks like at CTRA continues to be refined. A cycle of continuous reflection and professional development will provide the supports needed to implement a common vision and plan for higher order thinking across the school. The instruction at CTRA provides scholars with opportunities to receive personalized instruction, self-directed learning and reflection that allows exposure to authentic tasks, application of problem solving and inquiry skills and the ability to make connections across disciplines. Further providing educators with a common understanding and reflection of higher order thinking at CTRA will enhance the scholar experience.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- school leadership

Standard 3 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Across most grade levels and subjects, CTRA educators routinely adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each scholar by using formative assessments, differentiation, and purposeful group learning. All educators provide additional support and use alternative strategies to meet the needs of each CTRA scholar. All educators across all content areas use formative assessments during instructional time. One hundred percent of educators report improving their instructional practices by using scholar achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments. Examples of formative assessments utilized by educators to assess scholar understanding and comprehension include "please do now" activities, progress monitoring during classwork, group check-ins, individual check-ins (having a scholar restate the information), reviewing practice assignments (homework), projects, and exit slips. This is especially important given the school's commitment to heterogeneously grouped classes. Examples of how educators at CTRA differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all learners include, but are not limited to, using a variety of multi-modal teaching and learning strategies, pre-teaching and re-teaching in individual and small group settings, providing notes for scholars, using visuals aids, breaking assignments down into manageable parts, scaffolding assignments, designing curriculum to provide scholars with personal choice, modifying assignments, providing alternative text, allowing scholars wait time for their response, and providing guiding questions. In previous years the educators of CTRA worked collaboratively on defining and identifying differentiated instruction. Due to the high volume of educator turnover, it would benefit all staff to revisit this work on a recurring basis. Because CTRA educators routinely adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each scholar by using formative assessments, differentiation, and purposeful group learning, they are able to provide additional support and alternative strategies to meet the needs of each CTRA scholar.

Sources of Evidence
- classroom observations
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- Endicott survey

Standard 3 Indicator 4

Conclusions

CTRA educators, individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices by using scholar achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments, examining scholar work and using feedback from colleagues and supervisors. The freshman team of educators report using scholar achievement data to support and improve their instructional practices. The grade 9 team regularly meets to examine scholar work, writing samples, and projects along with reading and math assessment data (NWEA MAP test and SAT). They use this formative and summative data to differentiate instruction by creating advanced materials for scholars who consistently score well or, conversely, by re-covering material with which scholars struggled. In addition, educators give "please do now" and exit tickets as formative assessments and in some classes, specific scholar feedback forms within Google Classroom to inform necessary adjustments in instruction to impact scholar achievement. Currently, grades 10 through 12 do not uniformly share a common time to discuss scholar outcomes in the manner that the grade 9 team does. Educators do possess the results of many assessments. However, beyond utilizing PowerSchool scholar information system, there is no centrally located data warehouse. Educators at CTRA regularly meet with support staff and members of the administration to receive feedback about current practices to use research-based instructional practice. This is evident through the use of professional development days and the SEED teacher evaluation model. Some of the current research initiatives that CTRA incorporates are differentiated instruction, the Kagan model and they are piloting My Teaching Partner. While there is collaboration between the leadership team and staff, there are a minimal number of opportunities for scholars and parents to provide feedback to educators for the purpose of improving instructional practices. As a result of the ongoing collaboration and feedback between CTRA's leadership team and staff, educators continuously improve their instructional practices. Analyzing and efficiently disseminating scholar achievement data to drive instruction will further allow scholars to benefit from data-driven instructional practices.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- teacher interview
- teachers
- Endicott survey

Standard 3 Indicator 5

Conclusions

CTRA educators, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content areas and in content-specific instructional practices.

According to the Endicott survey, 89 percent of teachers at CTRA agree that they are committed to maintaining, reflecting on, and developing their expertise within their content areas, as well as staying current on content-specific instructional practices. Similar results of the survey were found with the scholars and parents. Teachers at CTRA have a multitude of opportunities within the school, locally, and nationally to maintain their expertise. There are many educators who are members of professional organizations and/or participate in content-specific workshops and annual conferences to maintain their knowledge of current practices and instructional strategies. For example, all of the new faculty participate yearly in a Kagan Cooperative Learning workshop, focusing on incorporating cooperative learning into the classroom setting. Three teachers at CTRA attended the Kagan annual summer conference to expand their knowledge of cooperative learning and current instructional practices which led to the hiring of two Kagan coaches to support implementation.

Educators are both encouraged to pursue their own continuing education and Masters degrees through college programs with St. Joseph's College and Goodwin College. One example to substantiate this at CTRA is, for many years, the CTRA professional development calendar devoted ample time in discussing and strategizing implementation of current research practices and topics. Additionally, the 9th grade team meets regularly during their personal time to collaborate on strategies best designed to foster scholar success while the curriculum consultants work with teachers to ensure the proper modifications and adjustments are made to ensure scholar success. The impact of staff turnover at CTRA and the negative impact on consistency in content-specific instructional practices vary. However, each beginning educator is paired with a mentor through the Connecticut Teacher Education and Mentoring Program and the school. And this program allows beginning educators and their mentors the chance to identify areas of weakness in a new educator's practice and to discuss and implement ways in which they can grow or improve. This process allows both veteran and new educators to continue their own reflective practices.

Becauseeducatorsmaintain expertise in their content areas and in content-specific instructional practices, CTRA is able to foster an environment for educatorsas adult learners and reflective practitioners.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- teacher interview
- school leadership

Standard 3 Commendations

Commendation

The purposeful integration of the school's core values throughout the instructional practices

Commendation

The growth and development of the culminating capstone project as a way to provide an experience that incorporates manyinstructional practices to support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning

Commendation

The extensive use of formative assessments to inform instruction

Commendation

The support for continued professional learning and examining current research

Commendation

The focus on integrating new scholar-driven activities such as magnet theme days and scholar-led conferences with the school's instructional practices

Commendation

The integral role personalized learning plays in daily instruction

Commendation

The commitment to authentic tasks and problem solving within school-wide instruction

Commendation

The state-of-the-art technology available for instruction opportunities

Commendation

The multitude of experiences that engage scholars in self-assessment and reflection

Commendation

The systemic focus on providing every scholar an opportunity to succeed by routinely and reflectivelyadjusting instructional practices for each scholar

Standard 3 Recommendations

Recommendation

Develop a clear understanding of what 21st century learning looks like at CTRA for all scholars to inform instruction in each class

Recommendation

Develop and implement a common understanding of rigor and higher order thinking at CTRA and a common vision of its application in instruction

Recommendation

Increase opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning in school-wide instruction

Recommendation

Provide the time and training so that initiatives are revisited and thoroughly integrated in instructional practices

Recommendation

Aggregate, analyze and disseminate scholar data to drive improved instructional practices for teaching and learning

Recommendation

Gather and analyzefeedback from all stakeholders to improve instruction

Recommendation

Regardless of the devotion to the goals of the above, CTRA must continue to guarantee that scholars are consistently challenged to be active and self-directed learners and apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks in every class, course, and department

Recommendation

Provide ongoing professional development on differentiation practices to ensure that all new staff have opportunities to engage in training

Standard 4 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The professional staff infrequently employs a formal process to assess whole-school progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations based on specific and measurable criteria for success. However, communication and critical thinking rubrics are commonly employed for writing and discussions at least twice a semester within certain content areas.

Many teachers utilize the departmental-wide rubrics in their grading, often modifying them as class-based grading rubrics, rather than utilizing them as a school-wide 21st century measurement for overall growth. Some content areas employ these rubrics more often than others. For example, English teachers employ the communication and critical thinking rubrics with certain assignments, ranging from long-term presentations to essay writing and analysis. These rubrics, however are still inconsistently employed. Most scholars are aware of these rubrics, but cite their use solely in discussions and in projects that incorporate writing. Scholars are more familiar with the connections to the three tenets, awareness, diversity, and action when an assignment requires them to make a connection. Scholars, therefore, have limited measurable goals with which they can assess their own growth in context of school expectations, as these rubrics, again, are limited to classroom use.

Many of these rubrics apply only course-specific learning goals, rather than 21st century learning goals. School administrators and instructional leaders have dedicated professional development time, multiple times each month during early release Fridays, to focus specifically on curriculum development and, subsequently, on improvement and development of specific school-wide 21st century rubrics. Instructional leaders include curriculum coaches to help all departments develop more aligned school-wide assessment and measurement.

When the professional staff employs a formal process based on school-wide measurable criteria for success, whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations can be accurately assessed.

Sources of Evidence
- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- Endicott survey

Standard 4 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Although the school's professional staff regularly communicates individual scholar progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to scholars and their families, the school lacks a process to communicate the school's progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to the school community.

The CTRA professional staff use rubrics for magnet standards, Habits of Mind, and the new rubrics for communication and critical thinking at least twice per course per semester to regularly communicate individual scholar progress to scholars. The majority of parents responded in the Endicott survey that they agree the school provides them with a formal report, in addition to course grades, that explain their children's progress in achieving the 21st century learning expectations. Families have access to Google Classroom, which houses all of the rubrics and graded assignments that have been returned to students, and are informed of student progress on those rubrics through PowerSchool and the comments of report cards in the second and fourth quarters. Parents are also invited to CTRA to hear scholars reflect on their own progress in achieving the 21st century learning expectations through scholar-led conferences, which were piloted for sophomores in the 2017-2018 school year. Beginning in the 2018-2019 school year, all freshmen, sophomores and juniors will host scholar-led conferences. Scholars also reflect on their progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations through their capstone project in their senior year.

The school's progress in achieving the 21st century learning expectations is not published to the school community, however, the Habits of Mind data is part of the end of year school report that is based on the school development plan. CTRA also celebrates scholars' achievements by publishing this information in the Goodwin College and LEARN district web-based communications.

As CTRA develops a formalized process to communicate the school's progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to the school community, stakeholders will be more aware of student achievement.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- Endicott survey

Standard 4 Indicator 3

Conclusions

In some areas, professional staff collect, disaggregate, and analyze data informally to identify and respond to inequities in scholar achievement.

CTRA teachers use strong formative assessments and pre-assessments in class consistently across the school. In the Endicott survey, only 50 percent of staff reported that they agree that they collect, disaggregate, and analyze data to identify and respond to inequities in scholar achievement. However, there were instances where changes to curriculum, materials, and assessments were made following analysis of some scholar performance data; changes included additions of courses for strategic reading and writing, math classes that meet every day, and supplemental science classes that focus on skills needed for the accompanying classes. There is an increased focus on SAT skills in classes and tracking of formative and summative assessments in spreadsheets as a result of the SAT and PSAT data. The implementation of the ninth grade teams is helpful in communicating observations between teachers, including analysis of common formative and summative assessments, and collaborating for solutions. There is some formal data collection in regards to the NWEA universal testing gathered upon entrance to and throughout scholars' time at CTRA, which is used to inform interventions. There is currently no accessible method of storing, analyzing, and transferring data in order to be more aware of scholar progress and growth.

As professional staff develops and implements a formalized system to better collect, disaggregate, and analyze data, they will be better able to identify and respond to inequities in scholar achievement across the school.

Sources of Evidence
- classroom observations
- teachers
- Endicott survey

Standard 4 Indicator 4

Conclusions

Prior to each unit of study, teachers frequently communicate to scholars the school's applicable 21st-century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed.

The majority of scholars, staff, and parents reported in the Endicott survey that teachers explain what the learning expectations are before each unit.Evidence was given of professional development emphasizing the importance of having detailed conversations with scholars at the beginning of each project regarding the expectations and leaving essential questions and learning goals on the board. There is evidence in many classrooms that this occurs as many teachers complete dashboards which are designated and labeled areas of the board for essential questions and learning goals that had been filled in. Rubrics are handed out ahead of time with clearly defined learning expectations and the goals of assignments. Teachers in many disciplines emphasized the use of exemplars to show scholars what the expectations are. Scholars have indicated that pre-assessments before a unit are helpful in understanding what their individual learning goals should be and what the overall expectations are for the unit.

Communicating the applicable 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed ensures that all scholars are provided with the opportunity to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- facility tour
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers

Standard 4 Indicator 5

Conclusions

Prior to summative assessments, teachers provide scholars with corresponding classroom rubrics. These analytic departmental rubrics provide scholars with a model for success for the particular assignment within the class and build into the collection of evidence that scholars use for their senior capstone project.

All information presented in summative assessments is first built upon in teacher formative assessment, which drives both instruction and development of curriculum. According to the Endicott survey, a majority of scholars state that teachers provide clear criteria through departmental rubrics to guide and assess their work. All teachers provide scholars with course-specific rubrics to inform and guide student comprehension, and effectively provide scholars with a clear guideline in regards to achieving success within the assignment. All classrooms and teachers display dashboards to scholars that provide information including unit essential questions, magnet standards, daily learning objectives, and homework assignments; it is this explicit information that drives student instruction in addition to required mastery for assessment, both formative and summative.

In response to the diverse range of incoming scholars, all teachers include pre-assessments to guide and personalize instruction. The corresponding classroom rubrics for each class differ departmentally, but still drive the requirements and understanding of scholars while holding them accountable for completion of assessments. Moreover, summative assessments are connected to CTRA's core values of awareness, diversity, and action, pushing scholars to look beyond the assignment and both connect and integrate their understanding of the values in the real world.

Although not shared across the school, departmental and classroom rubrics efficiently provide scholars with expectations prior to all assessments.As a result of providing scholars with expectations prior to summative assessments, each scholar has the opportunity to meet the expectations of each assessment.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- panel presentation
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 6

Conclusions

In each unit of study, teachers across the school employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments.

Ninety-five point seven (95.7) percent of staff reported in the Endicott survey that they use a variety and range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments. There has been extensive professional development surrounding a variety of formative assessments, which includes "please do now" assignments, exit slips, and Kagan strategies. Several departments reported having students reflect on whether or not they have met daily learning goals and why, answering a question similar to the essential question, or the essential question itself as a formative assessment. Using technology, such as IXL and Google Classroom, students have ongoing formative assessments, which teachers can use to monitor and measure student understanding to inform differentiation. Traditional tests are not the only form of summative assessments, teachers also incorporate a balance of tests, essays, and projects. Educators use project-based assessments in many courses, as well as Socratic seminars, lab reports, presentations, and movie creations, in addition to traditional tests. Many departments use choice boards or menus to give students a variety of options to demonstrate their learning, and departments work together to determine the best way to assess their material in formal benchmark assessments.

The variety of assessment strategies employed by teachers, including formative and summative assessments, lead to informed adjustment of curriculum and instruction, and in turn, increased scholar engagement in learning.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- student shadowing
- teachers
- Endicott survey

Standard 4 Indicator 7

Conclusions

Teachers collaborate on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments. In recognition of the need for departmental and teacher collaboration to improve curriculum and assessment, school leadership has implemented half days on Fridays, during full weeks to provide teachers with time to meet, discuss, analyze, and improve current curriculum to better integrate the school's 21st century learning expectations throughout CTRA. In the past, there have been extensive PD days to develop rubrics and tie benchmark assessment to content and magnet standards. Teachers continue to engage in these professional development days reviewing, practicing, and implementing strategies to improve both formative and summative assessment in building scholar knowledge.

The lack of common planning time limits the opportunity for interdisciplinary activity. As a result, the common use of "chunking" has been implemented across all departments to mitigate larger projects and to assist scholars in meeting deadlines efficiently and accurately. Subsequently, student responsibility and ownership have dramatically increased. Although there is a development of curriculum through these designated meeting times, collaboration between and among departments remains restricted to shared content areas such as the humanities department.

As a result of teachers regularly collaborating in formats both departmental and interdisciplinary on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, student achievement is optimized.

Sources of Evidence
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- Endicott survey

Standard 4 Indicator 8

Conclusions

Across the school, teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure scholars revise and improve their work.

Although teachers consistently and efficiently provide verbal feedback to scholars to correct and advise student understanding, written feedback is not always provided as consistently, nor as timely, as verbal feedback. Various forms of formative assessments provide scholars with a wide variety of opportunities to demonstrate their understanding while allowing the teacher the ability to monitor, assess, and correct any and all misconceptions within the classroom. Outside of the classroom, teachers provide ample time for scholars to meet with them during office hours to review work, address personal difficulties, and re-teach key information when needed, allowing scholars the ability to pursue success. To mitigate the stigma of failure, teachers allow scholars to revise any and all assignments whether the student has failed or not. If the scholar has failed, teachers require that they inform their parents, as well as to attend office hours, to revise and improve tasks until all standards are satisfied. According to the Endicott survey, the majority of scholars feel that they have full access to teachers for revisions and feedback to improve their work, with a high majority in agreement that their teacher offers suggestions to help them improve their schoolwork. The use of feedback for formative assessments informs the use and understanding of the summative assessment for all scholars.

While allowing scholars to revise their work significantly and positively enhances student work, when written feedback is both timely and corrective, scholars will be provided with consistent opportunities to demonstrate mastery.

Sources of Evidence
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- Endicott survey

Standard 4 Indicator 9

Conclusions

Teachers across the school regularly use formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving scholar learning.

There has been extensive professional development regarding formative assessments, and formative assessment methods were seen in a variety of classrooms. Scholars take the NWEA universal assessment for reading and math upon arrival at CTRA, again in their 9th grade year, once in 10th grade, and in 11th grade as needed for scholars needing intervention which provides some data of scholar learning, growth, and informs interventions. Pre-assessments are given regularly and relied upon heavily to inform differentiation methods. Teachers use rating scales for scholars to indicate an understanding of the material, scholar written summaries of learning, scholar reflections of connections to content and magnet standards, and other methods of formatively assessing scholar performance. In classes, there were references to why teachers needed information on scholar understanding and how they could adapt lessons to scholar needs. The implementation of curriculum time on half-day Fridays has increased staff collaboration surrounding curriculum and instruction, opening conversations surrounding scholar rigor and the best way to assess material. Teachers have begun the process of collecting SAT data and organizing it in spreadsheets to monitor student growth and inform what practices need more focus in class.

The variety and frequency of formative assessment provide more opportunities for teachers to inform and adapt instruction for the purpose of improving scholar learning.

Sources of Evidence
- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- teachers

Standard 4 Indicator 10

Conclusions

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 student work, common course/grade level assessments, and survey data from current scholars; however, the examination of school wide-progress, standardized assessments, and data from sending schools remain limited.

Although there are a high number of new teachers within the classroom, teachers utilize the concept of grade-level partners to transition new teachers with veteran staff guidance. These partners collaborate at least once a week to create common lessons, reflect on subsequent lesson performance, and inform and build a curriculum based on experiences and assessments within the classroom. These individual meetings build upon the ideas of student achievement and inform the process of building and revising curriculum in Friday professional development sessions. These meetings, both individual and departmental, are vital to identifying and responding to specific differentiation within the curriculum, ultimately helping teachers target weak areas to revise.

Additionally, through these professional development sessions, teachers have the ability to review and revise the recently implemented school-wide rubrics for communication and critical thinking. In one professional development session teachers reflected that the use of calibration, with stated rubrics utilizing student work, helped the staff recognize and modify common grading practices, the creation of assessments, and overall modification to the living curriculum. In the past, many teachers have cited the ability to collaborate with one another throughout the year, with some departments still developing the idea of common rubrics and assessments to evaluate and disseminate student evidence of learning, however, there is no formalized process to examine the school-wide rubrics. In the self-study, the science department specifically cited the need for development of a common lab report to be used across all grades; this need has since been remedied through interdisciplinary meetings with the English department to adapt and develop a common writing rubric. Also, the development of the MEAL paragraph writing format utilized in the English department is a shared practice across most of the school.

In regards to standardized assessment, teachers individually collect informal data on SAT skills to inform instruction. The English department currently creates SAT-styled questions around reading and writing based upon particular strands of language that scholars find difficulty with. These strands are examined and documented by each teacher, who use this to inform Kagan grouping within the classroom to improve Lexile scores. This push for literacy is being integrated throughout the rest of the school, however, it is not yet fully integrated in all subject areas. Other departments have focuses for SAT scores based upon their SLOs and needs of the department; these, in turn, play a role in driving instruction and assessment.

Because CTRA is a magnet school that utilizes the lottery system, sending school data is inconsistently provided due to the 50 sending school districts that compose the school population. This, of course, makes it difficult for teachers to accurately assess incoming scholars prior to enrollment at CTRA, however, teachers employ the use of pre-assessments within their curriculum to gauge scholar understanding and modify their curriculum, lessons, and assessments to differentiate accordingly. To remedy this issue, NWEA is utilized as a pre-assessment method to determine where incoming scholars are placed in accordance to their levels of comprehension during their freshman orientation, effectively identifying needs and grouping accurately. Collaboration among departments provides the teachers the reflective time to accomplish this task efficiently, garnering a better understanding of their scholars as the progress through the year. Through this kind of collaboration both departmentally and interdisciplinary, teachers can utilize scholar work to inform and develop curriculum and common lessons across the board.

Teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning to develop, revise and improve the written curriculum and create an ongoing and informed assessment for scholar learning.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- panel presentation
- department leaders

Standard 4 Indicator 11

Conclusions

In some areas, grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning.

The school continues to review methods of reviewing and reporting school-wide rubrics. In the Endicott survey, the majority of staff report that grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised. Teachers collaborate during the Friday half-day professional development time to review grading and reporting practices to ensure that they align with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. Eighty-seven point five (87.5) percent of parents report that they agree that teachers' grading practices aligned with the school's beliefs about learning. Progress regarding Habits of Mind have been provided in report card comments for second and fourth quarters in previous years; the new critical thinking and communication rubrics are also in progress of being reported to parents. The development and implementation of the critical thinking and communication rubrics, although new, is being incorporated into most classes across the school to track student skill progress, in addition to grades, often linking magnet standards and core beliefs. Some departments continue to evaluate and utilize the use of these rubrics in their own classes. In additions to standards, CTRA has implemented a revision process for unsatisfactory or failed work that is seen throughout the school. In this process, scholars can meet with teachers to receive feedback and plan for the revisions needed to meet expectations that align to core values and beliefs. In response to concerns about student responsibility, these policies have been modified over time to align to the values and beliefs, while holding students accountable.

Because grading and reporting practices are regularly revised, the core values and beliefs are consistently aligned; when all departments consistently report on student success guided by the school-wide rubrics, all stakeholders will be better informed on scholar success through CTRA's core values and expectations.

Sources of Evidence
- classroom observations
- self-study
- teachers
- Endicott survey

Standard 4 Commendations

Commendation

The development and implementation of the communication and critical thinking rubrics across the school to communicate progress in achieving the 21st century learning expectations to scholars

Commendation

The variety and regular use of formative assessment and pre-assessment to inform instruction throughout the school

Commendation

The response to identified student needs through the modification and improvement of curriculum, assessments, and instruction

Commendation

The implementation of dashboards in all classrooms to clearly communicate expectations to scholars at the beginning of each class period

Commendation

The use of exemplars and pre-assessments to model steps to success for scholars in achieving the 21st century learning expectations and course-specific learning goals

Commendation

The timely and definite expectations provided to students prior to summative assessments

Commendation

The variety of assessment strategies used throughout classrooms across the school

Commendation

The commitment to frequent professional development and improvement of assured assessments

Commendation

The ability of scholars to revise assignments and retake assessments in order to demonstrate growth toward mastery

Commendation

The variety and frequent use of formative assessments and pre-assessments in many classrooms across disciplines to inform and adapt instruction for the purpose of improving scholar learning

The collaboration between departments to establish and build departmental and school-wide measurements

The use of the MEAL writing strategy interwoven throughout most content areas

Standard 4 Recommendations

Recommendation

Implement a formal process to ensure that the two school-wide rubrics are effective in accurately measuring communication and critical thinking

Recommendation

Implement a formal process to capture the perceived effectiveness of each scholar to illustrate the three constructs of the school's mission (awareness, diversity, and action) in their senior capstone presentation

Recommendation

Develop a formal process to communicate the school's progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to the school communty

Recommendation

Implement a system of data collection that teachers can utilize to disaggregate and measure success school-wide

Recommendation

Provide opportunities for teachers to provide more timely written feedback

Recommendation

Develop and implement a process for effectively using the school-wide rubrics within and across the existing content curriculum

Standard 5 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The school community consistently builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that sometimes fosters scholar responsibility for learning and frequently results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all.

Nearly all teachers and parents feel that CTRA provides a safe, positive, supportive culture where scholars are encouraged to take control of their own learning. In an effort to provide a physically safe environment, all scholars are required to wear an ID throughout the day. If scholars forget their IDs they need to get a replacement one which also results in a flex detention. Doors are locked to prevent intruders and there are security guards on duty throughout the facility.

On the social-emotional front, a great deal of time and energy has been devoted to finding ways to foster strong relationships between and among adults, scholars, parents, and community partners. There are policies and procedures put in place to ensure a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture. They are disseminated to parents and scholars alike at the beginning of each school year through theCTRAHandbook as well as to faculty and staff through an employee handbook. CTRA has adopted restorative practices in an effort to improve school climate and enhance respectful behavior among scholars. Additionally, in the summer of 2018, CTRA began a one-week summer program for all freshmen to build relationships and respect for each other, the faculty, and the school. This program also provides an opportunity to assess scholars for better placement within courses.

As a proactive approach to disciplinary concerns and to create a sense of pride within the school community, CTRAimplements an advisory program in which all scholars and educators partake. The goal of advisory is to promote the development of meaningful relationships, foster a sense of belonging and community, and to allow for each scholar to be known and cared for by at least one adult in the school other than a school counselor. This simultaneously allows for a parent or guardian to know and reach out to an adult in the school who knows their child well. The scholar-scholar and scholar-educator relationships developed in advisory focus on improving school climate and ownership. The relationships built through advisory are also meant to help scholars monitor grades and achievement. There are additional programs and initiatives implemented to help promote school pride and student ownership. Flex time is built into the schedule to allow students to seek out additional help during teachers' office hours. This time may also be used to attend scholar or teacher-initiated clubs/activities, to work on magnet theme days or to find ways to give back to the community.

In an attempt to promote scholar responsibility for learning,CTRAinforms freshman about the opportunities for taking college-level classes through Goodwin College as juniors and seniors. They are assessed annually by their advisory teachers using a rubric to determine if they have the necessary skills for college-level classes. Scholars are also required to complete a capstone project as seniors and submit a portfolio showing growth over their four years at CTRA. Scholars have been allowed multiple opportunities to revise work regardless of the initial grade of the piece of work. Scholars feel this all-encompassing revision policy does not prepare them for the real world since those scholars attending classes through Goodwin are not afforded those same revision opportunities. They also indicated that because there were multiple opportunities for revisions that they sometimes did not prep as much as they should because they knew there would be an opportunity to make up the assignment. Beginning with the 2018 school year, scholars continue to have opportunities to revise work up until the end of the marking period. However, if a scholar does not hand in a summative assessment during a marking period, the scholar will receive a grade of 50 for that marking period.

Though the school community consistently builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture, when that culture consistently fosters scholar responsibility for learning, the school community will have shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The school is, by design, equitable, inclusive, and fosters heterogeneity where every scholar over the course of the high school experience is enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core course.

An essential part of CTRA's magnet school mission is to promote diversity and the purpose for the state's creation of magnet schools is to reduce racial and economic isolation. All scholars are selected to attend CTRA through ablind lottery system, in which the only requirement to be eligible is residency in Connecticut. As a result, scholars come to CTRA with a variety of academic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds. One of the core values at CTRA is diversity and one way that diversity is embraced is through heterogeneously grouped classes. For many of the core classes, scholars are heterogeneously grouped with teachers differentiating instruction as needed. In some cases, when differentiation is not sufficient, a co-teaching model is adopted. In addition to the special education support throughout the curriculum content areas, CTRA provides support to scholars at a Tier 2 level intervention. These interventions are provided through an extended learning program that is designed to support scholars who have not been special education identified, but need additional resources to be successful in their academics.Extended learning is an intervention for scholars who did not do as well as they could have or should have done in school their previous academic year(s). Strategic reading and writing courses are also offered to help support scholars.

As a result of deliberate design and strategies for differentiation and support, all scholars are provided with multiple opportunities to succeed in diverse, heterogeneous learning environments.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- panel presentation
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 3

Conclusions

There is a deliberate, formal, ongoing advisory program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

CTRA groups scholars heterogeneously into advisory groups of between 10-15 students for the purpose of ensuring that each scholar has at least one adult in the building who knows them well. The advisory period meets twice a week for 45 minutes as well as 7 minutes daily after the first academic block. While the daily meeting serves as more of a check-in period, the 45-minute blocks have a formal curriculum that is designed by grade level. All teachers act as advisors. The expectation that the advisor knows their scholars is reinforced by the fact that when teachers email a parent, the advisors are copied in on the messages. These advisory groups are referred to as their "small family" by scholars. Monthly magnet days are advisory based, with different themes being addressed by advisories. Additionally, seniors present their capstone projects to junior advisories, who score them using the capstone rubric, providing juniors with a preview of what they will be doing the following year. There are additional opportunities for scholars to interact with adults in a non-academic environment during flex club time.

As a result of the deliberate, formal, ongoing advisory program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to their school counselor, who knows them well, each student has at least one, and in many cases, several adults to assist them in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence
- classroom observations
- self-study
- panel presentation
- facility tour

Standard 5 Indicator 4

Conclusions

In order to improve scholar learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff regularly engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning; occasionally use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices; dedicate ample formal time across the school to implement professional development; and frequently apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

CTRA has dedicated professional development time built into the school year. Teachers attend ten additional days during the year dedicated to professional development. During the school year, most Fridays are early dismissal days for scholars to provide the staff additional time for professional development. In the past, the topics would rotate weekly. Beginning in 2018, the staff is dedicating the time to curriculum revision and development. There is a universal template used and curriculum for all disciplines are accessible to all teachers with links to documents available within the template. Since there is no universal common planning time, this dedicated time allows discipline-specific teachers to collaborate and reflect on teaching and learning.

LEARN believes that there is a great deal of internal expertise within CTRA. However, they will help to provide outside professional development if it is requested. Teachers may also seek out personal professional development opportunities, although it appears that some departments are more likely to have it budgeted than others. For example, the world languages department states that opportunities for professional development outside of the school are limited while other departments report that outside professional development opportunities are most often approved.Additionally, there have been a significant number of initiatives that have been implemented over time and teachers report that the number of new initiatives can be overwhelming. These initiatives may not be implemented long enough to be evaluated by the faculty for their efficacy before embarking on additional new initiatives.

As a result of dedicated formal time to implement professional development outside the school day, the faculty has ample opportunities for professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning in order to improve student learning.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- panel presentation
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 5

Conclusions

School leaders formally use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved scholar learning, and administration is offered training, coaching, and ongoing support. CTRA is a member of the LEARN Regional Education Service Centerand follows theirevaluation and supervision process. The process includes goal setting, mid-year check-ins, data collection, observations, and conferencing. This process is prescribed by the state of Connecticut.Educators in their first and second years receive at least three formal observations a year in addition to unannounced observations. Teachers with three or more years at LEARN receive at least one formal and two informal observations. The CTRA supervision processes include instructional walk-throughs that provide systemic as well as individual classroom information on strengths and areas in need of support. Eighty-two percent of educators believe that input from supervisors who are responsible for evaluating teaching plays an important role in improving instructional practices.As a result of this formal evaluation process, all teachers receive feedback from supervisors and stakeholders to improve teaching and learning.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 6

Conclusions

The organization of time, in a limited way, supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all scholars.

CTRA employs an alternate day 4X4block schedulebecause the school believes it takes time to learn and practice new concepts. Scholars take eight 82-minute classes across two days broken down into four blocks. This schedule also maximizes access to the early college program because the times align with Goodwin College's class schedule. Block scheduling is a research-based idea for preparing scholars to be successful when they take college class as juniors or seniors at CTRA, or in the future. However, the typical college student takes four or five classes a semester rather than the eight that CTRA scholars are required to take. In addition, CTRA's length of the day is considered extended compared with other high schools. CTRA believes scholars need more time in school to learn and develop relationships with the staff and with other scholars. Therefore, the school day begins at 7:45 a.m. and ends at 3:00 p.m. for a seven hour and fifteen-minute day. The schedule allows for a daily seven-minute advisory check-in time as well as two 45-minute blocks for extended advisory periods to encourage educator-scholar relationships. Additionally, FLEX time is built-in to allow for extra help, individual instruction, or specialized clubs or activities.

For every five-day school week, there is an early release Friday, allowing for dedicated professional development time for educators. Additionally, ten full days of professional development are scheduled for the staff to help improve teaching and learning. Freshman teaming has been implemented to help meet the needs of students. Educators on these teams are assigned common planning periods during the school day to collaborate with team members to help meet the needs of the freshman. An organization of time throughout the school community that supports the delivery of curriculum and best practices in instructional practice and also provides opportunities for professional collaboration will more fully support the learning needs of all students.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- teachers
- students
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 7

Conclusions

While student load per teacher significantly impacts the ability to meet the learning needs of students, class size is consistently reasonable for meeting student need.

The average class size for the 2017-2018 school year is 16 scholars per class, which is smaller than the state average and has been the case for many years. CRTA believes the small class size is necessary to have the level of engagement and individual accountability in every class, every day. However, teaching six classes for teachers with a total student load of often over 100 students per teacher for the year offsets the positive impact of low class size by compromising the ability of teachers to effectively personalize and differentiate instruction en route to meeting the learning needs of their scholars. Scheduling teachers for six classes each semester is likely to have contributed to the high staff turnover seen in recent years. Similarly, while the students appreciate the smaller class size, managing eight classes at the same time is problematic for them and contrary to the college life CTRA aspires to achieve as a goal for their learners. As a result of this class load, scholars are challenged to meet deadlines, manage the expectations of multiple teachers, and engage optimally in achieving the school's mission.

As a result of the class load per teacher, the faculty is challenged to effectively plan, provide timely written feedback, differentiate instruction and meet the learning needs of all their scholars.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- teacher interview
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 8

Conclusions

The principal, working with other building leaders, consistently provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations.

CTRA's principal and assistant principal, working with other school leaders, provide instructional leadership rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations through a leadership team called MAST (management, assessment, support, and training). MAST consists of the school's administrators, the special education coordinator, the three theme coaches, the five instructional facilitators who represent, lead, and support their own department colleagues, the curriculum project leader, the technology project leader, and the capstone coordinator.The MAST team meets for 90 minutes, twice per month. In between those meetings, the instructional facilitators meet with their departments to convey information from the school leaders, and back to the school leaders. An overwhelming majority of staff agree that the principal and assistant principal provide instructional leadership consistent with the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The administration is visible and accessible to both scholars and educators and reiterates the core values and beliefs. Administration works closely with committees such as the safety committee, the student intervention team, and the newly formed freshman teams, among others. The principal and assistant principal meet with all educators to establish scholar learning objectives each year with follow-ups to determine how much growth was made.

As a result of the principal consistently providing instructional leadership rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations, school initiatives are aligned to increase student achievement.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 9

Conclusions

While educators are frequently involved and scholars are often involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership; parents are rarely involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership.

Educators are encouraged to share ideas with their instructional facilitator to help improve teaching and learning. Teachers and staff, along with administration serve on MAST, the school's leadership team. Teachers are called upon for their expertise during in-house professional development. The administration includes educators in some policy-making and initiative decisions, as appropriate. Educators are responsible for finding strategies and activities to engage scholars both academically and emotionally. Scholars have the ability to choose capstone topics, propose activities and clubs, as well as propose initiatives that align with the core values.

The Connecticut River Academy has a governance council which meets monthly to determine the goals and action plans of the school. This council is made up of teachers, scholars, parents, and administrators. The CTRA governance council has been unable to recruit a sufficient number of parent members despite numerous attempts. In addition, those parents are not necessarily representative of the diversity at CTRA. The school has created a community outreach position this year to help recruit parentsand include them in the decision-making process.

When all stakeholders have meaningful and defined roles in decision-making, all constituents within the CTRA community will have a voice in promoting responsibility and ownership.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- teachers
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 10

Conclusions

All teachers regularly have the opportunity to exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase scholars' engagement in learning. Teachers may propose practices, instructional strategies, or other ideas to the MAST leadership team through instructional facilitators. They also feel that they can approach the principal and assistant principal directly with ideas and suggestions. Additionally, there are multiple opportunities for teachers to exercise initiative in increasing student engagement through activities such as magnet theme days, FLEX activities, and teaming activities. Teachers also have the opportunity to seek out individual professional development opportunities to improve teaching and learning.As a result, teachers have opportunities to improve the school and increase scholars' engagement in learning.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- teachers
- students
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 11

Conclusions

The Connecticut River Academy principal, the executive director of LEARN, and the director of magnet schools for Goodwin College, are always collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. The LEARN executive director and assistant director, as well as Goodwin College leadership, provide support to the principal of CTRA as needed. The three entities regularly collaborate in order to positively effect teaching and learning. Regular meetings are held with LEARN and CTRA administration, including twice-monthly meetings with all LEARN administrators and the executive director.As a result of this strong partnership, the CTRA administration is supported by Goodwin College and LEARN to help improve scholar achievement.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- panel presentation
- school leadership

Standard 5 Indicator 12

Conclusions

The LEARN agency board of directors, executive director, and Goodwin College Magnet School Leadership Team collectively and consistently provide the CTRA principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school. While there are two agencies who work to support CTRA, the greater part of the decision-making rests with the principal, either collaboratively or unilaterally. The majority of staff and parents believe that the principal is provided with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school. The LEARN executive director and assistant executive director view their role more as a source of support for the principal in decision-making, refraining from dictating how the school should be run. While Goodwin provides the fiscal budget, the principal has a great deal of influence on the allocation of the money to best serve the school community.As a result of this collaboration, the school principal has sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- panel presentation
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Commendations

Commendation

The fostering of relationships between adults and scholars

The safe and supportive school climate

The creation of FLEX time during the school day to help meet scholar needs

Commendation

The many supports in place to support students in heterogeneous grouped classes

The strong advisory program that provides each scholar with at least one adult who knows them well and supports their success at CTRA

Commendation

The constructive use of generous dedicated professional development time

The formal feedback from evaluators to improve instruction

Commendation

The school schedule that allows scholars to access classes at Goodwin College

Commendation

The small class size that illustrates an optimal staff-to-student ratio within individual class sections

The strong school leadership that works collaboratively with faculty, staff, scholars, and parents

Commendation

The choice students have in selecting their capstone topic and the ability to create clubs and activities

Commendation

The principal's autonomy for decision-making and oversight on the allocation of funds

Commendation

The cohesive, supportive partnership of the CTRA, LEARN, and Goodwin College

Commendation

The strong instructional leadership provided by the principal

Commendation

The accessibility of the principal to the entire CTRA community

Standard 5 Recommendations

Recommendation

Re-evaluate the school's revision policy to better serve scholars

Recommendation

Ensure that all departments have equal access to outside professional development opportunities

Recommendation

Utilize multiple data points in collaboration with the professional development and evaluation committee to determine targeted professional development to improve rigorous instruction

Recommendation

Analyze and plan interventions to the current master schedule on the effectiveness of students learning when taking eight different classes at the same time

Recommendation

Analyze and make recommendations to the community for the modification of the alternate day 4X4 block schedule that simultaneously aligns with the semester structure of Goodwin College classes while reducing teacher class load and student class load each semester at CTRA

Recommendation

Recruit a diverse group of parents to engage in feedback and decision making

Standard 6 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The school has extensive, timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all scholars, including identified and at-risk scholars, that support each scholar's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

The educators at CTRA meet multiple times a week through the Scientifically Researched-Based Intervention (SRBI) process looking at data on scholars in grade 9 specifically, then grades 10-12 separately. There is a full-time reading specialist, math teacher dedicated to math intervention, academic achievement counselor, full-time paraprofessional, two full-time behavior intervention staff members, a full-time attendance intervention coordinator, two social workers, a school psychologist, and a special ed coordinator/SRBI coordinator dedicated to meeting weekly. These support personnel look at data on scholars who are at-risk academically, behaviorally, social-emotionally or with attendance concerns. The special education teachers co-teach a variety of classes in order to meet the needs of the identified scholars with IEPs. Extended learning classes and early college support classes are in place to give extra support to scholars as needed.

Because of the successful implementation of an effective, timely, and coordinated intervention process, the scholars at CTRA are ensured to have their learning difficulties met through a variety of interventions in order to meet CTRA's core values and beliefs.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- panel presentation
- school website

Standard 6 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The school provides timely and responsive information to families, especially to those most in need, about available scholar support services.

The school maintains an extensive website, kept up-to-date frequently by the library/media specialist and a math teacher, which houses school information, news and events, and school and community resources. The website's landing page provides links to Naviance, Google Classroom, PowerSchool, and Facebook. Information is also provided to families through school mailings, email, and phone calls. School counselors make individual phone calls to parents to schedule them for one of three financial aid, FAFSA workshops, resulting in a 90 percent attendance rate and invite incoming scholars' parents to bring their scholar to the Grade 9 Summer Academy, resulting in a 71 percent attendance rate. A community outreach coordinator was hired in August 2017 to assist with connecting scholars and educators to community organizations and opportunities, resulting in Spanish/English language signage for families, office staff and security guard training, and teacher support; all of whom are expected to communicate with families on an ongoing basis and log contact in PowerSchool. Special education teachers and 504 case managers contact parents monthly and as needed. Parents are invited to attend their scholar's PPT and 504 meetings, re-entry meetings, health provider meetings, team meetings, open house nights, scholar-led conference, parent-teacher conferences, grade 9 team meetings, and individually-scheduled college financial aid workshops for parents and seniors. A bilingual coordinator was hired in fall 2018 to increase native language communication and access to native language support in response to CTRA's growing ELL scholar population. CTRA employs two part-time translators for parent meetings, to translate documents, and to interpret phone calls. The Endicott survey shows that 74 percent of parents agree or strongly agree that CTRA provides information about available scholar support services to all families.Because of the timely and deliberate delivery of information responsive to the needs of their scholars, CTRA families have access to regular information about their numerous scholar support services.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- panel presentation
- school support staff
- Endicott survey

Standard 6 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Support services staff use technology to deliver a vast range of coordinated services for each scholar.
The special education teachers, intervention providers, and speech and language clinician, and other support staff use a wide variety of assistive technology tools to meet the needs of each scholar at CTRA in order for them to be successful.

Scholars have access to JAWS for text to speech and a Braille embosser for visual impairment, FM systems for those with hearing impairments, Dragon text to speech, Kurzweil 3000 text reading, and Co-Writer for those with reading and writing weaknesses. Scholars with low muscle tone have a variety of low-tech devices to help strengthen their muscles and an OT was added this year to help coordinate these delivery methods. Scholars with emotional and attention issues have access to sensory fidgets. There is remediation software to help in reading and math, as well as translation software for ELL learners.

IEPs are set up in conjunction with the director of special education and sending school districts. IEPs are written in a software program called, Frontline, with the exception of one school district. Educators have access to identified students IEP accommodations through PowerSchool in order to meet their needs. Teachers use technology to keep track of attendance, grades, and transcripts through PowerSchool. Students taking classes at Goodwin College also receive a transcript directly from the college, and CTRA keeps a copy of that on file. Behavior data, such as in-school and out-of-school suspensions is kept on the SWISS data tracking system.

While some additional training is needed, because of the wide variety of assistive technology available to the scholars at CTRA, and the coordinated implementation of services, scholars have an optimal opportunity to succeed in their academic classes as these devices have been put into place to support them.

Sources of Evidence
- classroom observations
- self-study
- teacher interview
- students

Standard 6 Indicator 4

Conclusions

School counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who meet regularly with most scholars to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling; engage in individual and group meetings with most scholars; deliver deliberate collaborative outreach, and refer to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers. While they do not yet have a written, developmental program, they extensively use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each scholar achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

The school's counseling department employs three full-time school counselors for 471 scholars, resulting in a 165:1 counseling caseload. Additionally, there is an early college theme coach who also serves as the director of school counseling and as a liaison with Goodwin College for coordination of college enrollment, an office manager who maintains files and communications, and a career internship and parent outreach coordinator. The Endicott survey shows a disparity about whether scholars feel that they met regularly with their school counselor each year; 37 percent agree or strongly agree and 37 percent disagree or strongly disagree. Additionally, the Endicott survey states that 65 percent of scholars are in agreement that they feel comfortable going to the school counselor.

Based on the Endicott results, school counseling staff began initiatives to collaborate closely with seniors for capstone class, co-teach lessons in advisory classes, and hold post-secondary planning meetings with juniors and seniors on a more regular basis. While there is no evidence of a written, comprehensive developmental guidance program, school counselor's time is used appropriately to co-teach classes in the grade 9 advisory and senior capstone and to facilitate grade-level student success plan implementation, such as the Myers-Briggs personality inventory (maintained through Naviance) and PSAT preparation in grade 10, as well as post-secondary/college planning in grade 11.

By design, counselors, assigned to scholars by their last name, are able to follow scholars for four-years. Counselor's focus on grade 11 post-secondary planning, grade 12 capstone support, and 9th grade transition through involvement with teaming. Additionally, school counseling staff schedule college visits, coordinate senior and junior planning day and evening events, contact parents individually, serve as consultants and collaborate with scholar support teams (504, PPT, SIT, SRBI), and one school counselor is responsible for creating the CTRA master schedule.

Because the school counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff, school counselors are able to hold regular meetings with scholars for personal, academic, career, and college counseling, provide individual and group meetings, deliver collaborative outreach and referrals to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers, and extensively use ongoing, relevant assessment data. Once a written, development guidance program is put in place, scholars will fully have the capacity to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence
- classroom observations
- student shadowing
- students
- Endicott survey

Standard 6 Indicator 5

Conclusions

The school's health services have an extensive number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who provide comprehensive preventative health services and direct intervention services; use appropriate referral processes; conduct ongoing scholar health assessments; and use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each scholar achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

CTRA is host to a school-based health center (SBHC) staffed by a registered nurse that functions as a school nurse, overseeing vision and scoliosis screening, maintenance of cumulative health records that assure state compliance for physicals and vaccinations using SNAP, in addition to serving as a resource to the school by attending IEP, 504, and re-entry post hospitalization meetings, and provides information to teachers regarding health issues. The nurse sees about 6 percent of the scholar population on average per day, excluding daily medication visits. Additionally, the SBHC is staffed by an advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) who also provides vision, hearing, scoliosis, mental health, and gross dental screenings for the SBHC. Positive results from screenings are referred to the appropriate services. Scholars and their families can opt to enroll and be seen at the integrated health services office (IHS) by completing a parent permission form, where the APRN provides wellness exams, physicals, immunizations, nutrition/weight-loss counseling, chronic disease education, and reproductive health care/STD education.

Dental services, such as cleanings, x-rays, sealants, and filings, are accessible for scholars enrolled in CT Husky Medicaid insurance and referrals to the Goodwin College Dental Clinic are made for crowns and root canals. Mental health service referrals can also be made by the APRN to one of two licensed social workers in the IHS for up to six visits prior to any referrals to outside services.

The office is managed by one full-time administrative assistant who provides secretarial support, processes medical billing, and manages the scholar waiting room. In 2017-18, the IHS had 70 percent of the scholar population signed up and conducted 271 scholar visits. The IHC surveys participating scholars using an IHS Health Services Questionnaire.

Because of the extensive school's health services offered to support CTRA scholars and their commitment to providing an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff, who provide preventative health services and direct intervention services, make referrals, conduct scholars health assessments, and outreach to scholars' parents, the scholars' health and mental health needs are successfully met.

Sources of Evidence
- classroom observations
- self-study
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 6 Indicator 6

Conclusions

Library/media services are integrated into the curriculum and instructional practices at CTRA and have a sufficient number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who provide services to scholars.

The library/media center, also called the "project center," is staffed by one full-time, certified library media specialist and a full-time paraprofessional. The media specialist assists students in the library/media center with book selection, technology usage, and projects from the classroom. The media specialist also pushes into the classroom to assist with capstone projects, introduces 9th grade classes to available technology and digital citizenship, English and social studies classes to assist with research papers, and when teachers request her assistance.

Noodletools was purchased to assist scholars when writing research papers, it helps them write thesis statements, outline the paper, and assist with citations. Scholars and educators have access to a variety of resources to support their curriculum in the library/media center such as databases, nonfiction and fiction books, iPads, Kindles, magazines, mobile SMARTBoards, and a 3D printer.

The library/media center also serves as a place where classes can meet to work on projects, tutoring sessions, the extended learning center classes meet there, and there is a conference room for college visits and other appropriate gatherings. According to the Endicott Survey, 91 percent of parents believe that the library/media center provides a wide range of materials, technologies, and other information services that fully support the school's curricula. Of the scholars surveyed, 63 percent agree that the library/media center staff is willing and able to help scholars find the information they want or need. Scholars reported the library/media center is one of their favorite places to go because it is inviting, and has a lot of resources to help them be successful in their classes.The library/media specialist reported that she has increased the book selection over the past couple of years by 300-400 books based, partially by students request, and partially on school need. While there is not a formalized system for requesting a book, students can approach the librarian and make suggestions for books to add to the collections in both fiction and non-fiction.

While print resources are somewhat limited, because of the integrated technology services at CTRA available in the library media center and consistently promulgated by the librarian, scholars are able to have access to wide range of technologies, material and information to improve their learning and access to the 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- students
- Endicott survey

Standard 6 Indicator 7

Conclusions

Support services for identified scholars, including special education, section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners, have a limited number of certified/licensed personnel in some areas and support staff at CTRA who collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations, provide inclusive learning opportunities for all scholars, and perform ongoing assessment using relevant data including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each scholar achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

The school employs special education teachers, paraprofessionals, a special education coordinator, a director of special education, two social workers, a school psychologist, a speech and language pathologist, occupational therapist, guidance counselors, and two behavior interventionists, in order to remain in compliance with IEPs and 504 Plans. There are 84 identified scholars with IEPs shared among five special education teachers, eighty-five 504 scholars case managed by the three school counselors, and 39 ELL scholars with one 0.5 ELL coordinator and one certified English teacher who has been trained in Sheltered Instruction Observational Practices (SIOP) to support ELL scholars in classes.

General and special education teachers collaborate weekly on progress, and work together to meet the IEP goals, and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of each scholar to ensure success. Co-taught classes are offered in math and English to assist the scholars in these areas. However, co-taught classes are not offered to support scholars in social studies and science.With the continuous growth of the special education population, it is evident there is a need for an increase of special education support dedicated to classroom instruction in the co-teaching model.There are functional classes for scholars, as well as transitional services. The learning center is where the special education teacher works with scholars on their individual goals and objectives, self-advocacy, and assists with academic help when needed (i.e., pre-teaching, reviewing for a test, working on the project). Paraprofessionals are assigned to scholars based on specific needs, behavioral, medical, educational, and work with educators to ensure their success in the classroom, work toward independence, and help follow safety plans when put in place as well. Assessments are made in the classroom to ensure IEP goals are being met, triennials are done as mandated for data, as well as regular school-wide assessments to track data. In response to data, there has been an addition of a 0.5 ELL coordinator, to assist the increasing ELL population. Safety plans are put into place as needed when scholars demonstrate the need for one based on behavior concerns.

The existing support provided to most CTRA scholars and the access to a wide variety of educators and support staff ensures that most scholars receive the support necessary for academic success and social-emotional safety during their day at CTRA. When the school is able to provide adequate support in all courses, all scholars will have the opportunity to succeed in each of their classes.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview

Standard 6 Commendations

Commendation

The myriad intervention programs offered to scholars in order to meet their needs in a timely, effective manner

Commendation

The SRBI team meetings to investigate at-risk students and to develop success plans

Commendation

The personalized outreach efforts on behalf of the CTRA staff to their scholars' families to provide timely and responsive student support resources and services

Commendation

The excellent selection and application of technology and assistive technology in order to support scholar learning

Commendation

The coordination of data collection with and by the sending schools in regards to IEPs and 504s

Commendation

The school counseling department's timely and coordinated responsiveness to assessment data

Commendation

The counselors' classroom involvement in capstone and grade 9 advisory, which fosters scholars' academic readiness and achievement

Commendation

The counselors' commitment to fostering positive academic, career, and socio-emotional growth for CTRA's scholars

Commendation

The school counseling department's welcoming and inviting environment, including the ease of accessibility for scholars to see the CTRA school counselors

Commendation

The school-based health center's comprehensive services and the referral process that provides comprehensive health services available to all scholars, particularly to those most at-risk

The school nurse's outreach to CTRA scholar families to get a large majority of CTRA scholars enrolled with the integrated health services center

The excellent utilization of space in the library media center dedicated to expanding upon learning, tutoring, technology support, research assistance, small group meetings, and collaboration with teachers

The wide variety to technology services available to scholars in the library media center that supports their academic success

The practice of push-in instruction into classrooms by the library media specialist that enhances the learning of scholars through media and technology

The variety of special education services that meet the needs of identified scholars and provide them with the opportunity to be successful in the academic classes and their post-secondary plans

Standard 6 Recommendations

Recommendation

Provide additional training for educators and scholars on the wide variety of assistive technology available to ensure continued academic success in the classroom

Recommendation

Create and implement a written comprehensive developmental guidance program

Recommendation

Perform ongoing assessments which measure the effectiveness of CTRA's school counseling and library/media services

Recommendation

Expand the library/media center resource print collection to include those topics appropriate to that being studied in classes, at all reading levels and languages

Recommendation

Provide academic support services to identified scholars in all necessary subjects/classes

Standard 7 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The Connecticut River Academy receives 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, and sufficient instructional materials and supplies.

The principal meets internally with the school leadership team (MAST) to identify and discusses a full range of budget priorities. Once the MAST team identifies program priorities, the principal collaborates with LEARN and Goodwin College to identify appropriate staffing requirements to meet those program needs. After the staffing budget is created, the requisite equipment, instructional supplies, and technology are requested to support the implementation of the educational program.

The budget is ultimately reviewed and approved by the board of directors of Goodwin College. CTRA has expanded program options over its short lifetime, especially notable is the addition of the advanced manufacturing program, which will be housed in a new facility expressly designed for it. Conversations concerning budget priorities take place among the various leadership groups, happens throughout the year, and they are proactive in seeking out grants and other secondary revenue streams to fund supporting programs such as the after-school program and professional development activities. Currently, parents do not have the ability to provide feedback to leadership about the school budget. The budget process takes place internally among the leadership team and is not communicated publicly until accepted. Capital expenses, building maintenance, security, and technology services are provided by Goodwin College.

The Endicott survey indicates that most staff members agree that technology support is adequately supported. Novus Insight, the external contractor for IT services meets regularly with school leadership to assess technology needs and works to support the scholars and faculty based upon leadership feedback. Goodwin College maintenance has staff on school grounds each school day, and they develop a maintenance plan for the school in collaboration with the principal and the Goodwin College maintenance department. The staff report that the plan meets the needs of both educators and scholars.

CTRA has sufficiently budgeted to have appropriate staff to support the educational programming of the school. With the addition of the advanced manufacturing program, additional administrative and teaching staff was hired to support that new program. As the school has grown and developed it has added positions to meet the needs of students. Support staff has increased with need, particularly notable in the addition of a special education administrator to help the school cope with the rising number of special education demand among scholars. Class sizes are typically small (16 scholars) and the staff agrees in surveys that the educational program at CTRA is funded appropriately.

CTRA has a significant amount of time and resources dedicated to professional development of staff. Ten days throughout the year are allocated for professional development activity, and a number of Fridays that have a half-day dedicated to professional development provide ample time for staff to meet. Although the staff PD budget has been reduced by 76 percent in FY 2018, teachers and administrators both indicate they are satisfied with the number of professional development offerings.

Technology is well supported at CTRA. Novus Insight provides personnel that supports faculty, staff, and students in their technology use. Each student has a one-to-one laptop that they receive as freshmen. The staff receives a laptop to use in their classrooms as well as desktop machines. Other computers are available throughout the building for specialized purposes (i.e., security, library and music computer lab). The budget is created collaboratively between Novus Insight and the principal with final approval of the Goodwin College Board.

CTRA has exceptionally well-maintained equipment, as most of the physical items are within five years old, and are maintained by Goodwin College staff and CTRA faculty with care. Several spaces with new equipment are well-cared for. Staff reported that students are taught to respect the equipment of the school and take pride in the quality they enjoy. When new equipment is requisitioned, faculty reports that most requests are honored quickly

to support new ideas relative to instruction. Significant support also comes from Pratt & Whitney to fund new initiatives in the manufacturing program, and machine equipment is up-to-date, safe, and cutting edge. The planning stages of the CTRA Annex for Manufacturing have seen most of the leadership's requests being met, with the potential to once again grow and expand the curriculum with high quality equipment.

CTRA has sufficient instructional materials and supplies to deliver the curriculum effectively to the student body. The school budget regularly supports the teachers' requests for program materials, whether it is software for a computer lab or paper for classroom use. Universally, faculty and scholars feel that the instructional materials are budgeted for, and the principal creates enough margin in her budget to accommodate unanticipated requests throughout the year.

As the community provides dependable funding to deliver the curriculum to scholars, CTRA educators enjoy the ability to develop and grow the educational program and achieve the mission of the school to create scholars who will use their gifts to contribute to a just and sustainable world.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The school, in conjunction with the Goodwin College maintenance department, develops, plans, and funds programs that ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant, properly maintains, catalogs, and replaces equipment, and keeps the school clean on a daily basis.

The responsibility of maintaining the building is handled by Goodwin College, and its maintenance department has detailed schedules using electronic management systems to do so. As the building is newly built, repair has not been as great a concern due to age, yet the maintenance staff has worked diligently to tune the systems for the comfort of the educators and scholars in the school building. When a repair is required, school-based maintenance staff will place the requests into the electronic SchoolDude information system to be prioritized by staff. HVAC maintenance and filter replacement are scheduled on a regular rotation to ensure optimal scholar health. Educators and scholars indicate their satisfaction with the overall air quality of the building.

All of the equipment throughout the building is cataloged and asset tagged. As most of the equipment was acquired recently, most is in excellent condition. However, items that require special care receive special attention from proper vendors. For example, theGoodwin Navigator, the school's research vessel is certified and maintained every year by trained personnel at a local marina down river. They ensure that all of the components of the vessel comply with ADA regulation and is fully accessible and safe for all students. Exhaust hoods in laboratory and technology spaces are regularly cleaned by outside vendors to ensure the health and safety of the scholars. A large number of scholars and educators agree that the furniture and equipment is in exemplary condition.

There is a funding plan for equipment repair and replacement. However, the need to replace the new infrastructure is currently minimal and most of the focus is on bringing the building and the new annex being constructed across campus to their full capacity.

The school is clean, and the community is proud of the condition of the school. Three day-time custodians and a night-time cleaning service do an exemplary job of preserving the building in its pristine status. Scholars, educators, and maintenance staff all indicated a shared responsibility for making the facilities a place to be proud of. Educators indicated that graffiti is almost unheard of and in the rare occurrence of it, it is swiftly dealt with.

Custodial staffing is more than adequate and coupled with their partnership with the Goodwin College maintenance staff, they work to create a clear pathway for all at CTRA to have their needs met so they can focus on delivering the curriculum to the scholars instead of the building.As the facilities of CTRA are in exemplary condition, educators and scholars can realize their educational goals in an environment that is clean and well equipped to deliver the curriculum. There is a plan in place to ensure that this continues to be the case for some time to come.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Goodwin College, the state of Connecticut, and local towns fund CTRA's programs and services, staffing needs, facility needs, technology and capital improvements, yet do not provide a long-term plan that communicates how the school achieves its long-term goals.

Most of the funding decisions for the school are made annually through discussion among Goodwin College, LEARN, and the principal of the school. Ultimately, fiscal authority resides with the Goodwin College Board, who receives all funding and allocates funds based upon an annual budget. While support for new programs has been generous to-date, a written plan has yet to be formulated that articulates how CTRA will continue to evolve fiscally over a number of years. A challenge in creating this is the uncertainty from the state of Connecticut in providing their decision regarding reimbursement for each seat at the school, which in turn hampers the ability to forecast coming years financial planning. However, the opportunity to set a draft plan in place that communicates the future of the school has not been realized by the school, LEARN, or Goodwin College to-date.

When long-term budgetary plans are shared with all stakeholders, school improvement plans can align with budgetary investment and lead to improved outcomes over a sustained time period leading to a positive and persistent change

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- facility tour
- school leadership

Standard 7 Indicator 4

Conclusions

Faculty and administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the annual budget. Budget formulation begins when each department prepares its budget request, and the leadership team (MAST) collaborates with the principal to inform her of their needs for the upcoming year. The principal then formulates a school budget that includes all aspects of the financial program, including staffing concerns. She is advised by LEARN and Goodwin College staff before the request is sent to the Goodwin Board for approval. This is not a public process, yet the principal is given an opportunity to advocate for the budget she has created on behalf of the school community. The uncertainty of the results of the scholar lottery (enrollment) and state reimbursement rates presents a challenge to making a plan for each upcoming school year in advance, and the principal adjusts the budget throughout the year to accommodate those variances. Teachers often mentioned the principal's ability to identify funding sources for new equipment or software throughout the school year, and the flexibility that she has demonstrated show the autonomy she has in implementing the practical reality of the daily expenses of the school. Flexibility is regarded highly at CTRA, as the young school reflectively examines what practices are most effective for their scholars and is unafraid of changing course if the outcomes do not achieve their intentions. The close collaboration of the principal with Goodwin College staff also connects the school to a number of grants in order to supplement and grow their programs for scholars. The synergy between the two financial departments works to the ultimate benefit of scholars. However effective this process is in the short term, this planning does not apply in the long-term scale. As building faculty and administration are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget, resources can be efficiently and flexibly allocated to improve the teaching and learning at CTRA.

Sources of Evidence

- community members
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 5

Conclusions

The school site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services. Building facilities are not only brand new, they are also well designed and prepared to deliver the educational program. The plan of the building is designed to be sustainable, with an efficient heating and cooling system, and a unique greywater system that recycles rainwater for non-potable uses such as toilet flushing. The building reflects the school's theme of sustainability throughout. Science laboratories are numerous and have different focuses. The project center (school library) has a number of staff who share the communal space and combine individualized instruction with independent responsibility for scholars to engage in independent learning. While printed resources are limited, a vast number of digital resources from Goodwin College provide a large number of options for scholars and satisfy their information needs. The cafeteria is ample in size and is equipped with new equipment to provide for the school lunch program. Classrooms are numerous, have SMARTBoards, whiteboards, speakers, and state of the art teacher computers. Furniture is modular, dynamic, and ergonomic.

A number of other facilities exist beyond the core classrooms to support scholar learning. Physical education has a large gymnasium connected to a fitness room equipped with high quality weightlifting machines as well as a rowing machine. The school dock is well maintained and handicap accessible. There is handicap accessibility to board the vessel, and a maintained head space on board as well. There is ample, private space for support staff to meet with scholars individually or in small groups located throughout the school. Reception areas for visitors and scholars are adequate and welcoming, and the health suite and clinic both have top of the line facilities for scholars who use those services. The music room is intentionally designed for that type of instruction.

Outdoor areas are well lit, secured, and safe. There is a parking garage next to the school where faculty can park their cars, and they are comforted by the ubiquitous security apparatus that protects them, and the scholars, as they enter the building. This includes the areas leading to the boat dock and at the advanced manufacturing annex that currently houses that program. Security personnel and maintenance staff work collaboratively to provide a safe environment that is well maintained. As the facility is newly built and well planned it allows educators to deliver the programs and services the school offers on a campus of which scholars and educators alike are proud.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- student shadowing
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 6

Conclusions

Goodwin College 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. Due to the newness of the CTRA campus, the design of the school is up-to-date and compliant with all building codes and accessibility requirements. All documents for maintenance are housed with the Goodwin College maintenance department, and the chemical safety sheets for the chemistry classrooms are retained by the teachers of those classrooms. All fire alarms and extinguishers are serviced by outside contractors on a regular basis. Disposal of hazardous materials is done in a compliant manner by science teachers and health staff. CTRA, in conjunction with Goodwin staff, have state of the art HVAC systems that ensure healthy air circulation that fits in the parameters set to provide a comfortable environment for teaching and learning. Sensors that measure detailed information of the air quality adjust automatically and may be adjusted manually by maintenance personnel. This can be done with a simple radio call and the technician makes the necessary adjustment on their mobile device. The building temperatures are seasonally adjusted and monitored by staff to ensure the health of all educators and scholars.

CTRA uses the SchoolDude maintenance request portal to communicate the maintenance needs of the school to Goodwin College personnel. As the maintenance staff is ever-present in the building for frequent inspection and collaboration with the principal, they shoulder the work of managing the building requests and identifying funding sources for the overall maintenance of the building. These requests are acted upon in a timely fashion and staff reports that they are satisfied with the rapid responses they get to their requests. As the school facility is compliant with all regulatory imperatives, educators and scholars exist in a safe, comfortable and healthy environment which supports improved teaching and learning.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- facility tour
- teachers
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 7

Conclusions

The professional staff does not actively engage parents as partners in each student's education or reach out specifically to those families who have been less connected with the school. While there are efforts underway to reach out to parents, much of those attempts to make parents a meaningful part of the fabric of CTRA have not been realized. The wide diversity of sending home locations makes it difficult to target a specific area for outreach, for scholars are not located in a geographic community as in a traditional public school. Educators are expected to call or email scholar parents in order to update them on their children's progress in school and how they can support the scholar learning. An attendance coordinator reaches out to families through the telephone and with home visits. Each of these programs is somewhat effective in notifying parents of their children's needs. Currently, there is no method to measure the efficacy of the program and if every scholar's family is being included in the program, regardless of their home situation.

New attempts to bring parents into the life of the school have begun. These include moving post-secondary high school planning from senior year to sophomore year, as it was apparent that parents needed more time in order to plan for their scholar's success, and at the registration day parent information is collected and plans were made to use that information to best communicate with them. However, these attempts are only the beginning of a process to rethink how the educators engage families as partners at CTRA. When parents are actively engaged as partners in their children's education, scholars are more adequately supported in their learning as the core values of the school are reinforced by the parents who informed them.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- teacher interview
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 8

Conclusions

While the school develops some productive community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning, parent partnerships with the school are lacking. The unique position that CTRA enjoys by being owned and operated by Goodwin College provides a direct pipeline for students to begin to experience collegiate life while still in high school and gain credits ahead of time that can be applied at other schools or continued to complete a Goodwin degree. The early college program has regular discussions with CTRA through the program coordinator, who also provides supports within CTRA space that enriches the work of the Goodwin College teachers. Students can earn up to 30 credits for free through the program. Furthermore, seminars are held to advise parents on the FAFSA process that is led by the director of financial aid of Goodwin College. SAT training also takes place with juniors who are participating in the program.

Business and industry provide significant resources to CTRA. The relationship of Pratt and Whitney to the school has inspired the advanced manufacturing program which is already underway and will soon grow with the new annex building. They donate to the program to support the purchase of machinery that will teach students how to be proficient in a field that they expect to have a number of well-paying jobs available in. Junior Achievement also provides entrepreneurship opportunities and tries to connect students to the job shadowing opportunities. There are some job shadowing opportunities that the scholars are encouraged to pursue, but formal offerings set up by CTRA are few. There are a number of community service connections CTRA educators benefit from. Scholars have a number of community service projects they participate in throughout the Hartford region, in particular with Foodshare and the Community Renewal Team. Groups of scholars travel to serve in these organizations and their experiences are shared on a magnet theme day focused on service. Other local non-profit groups support CTRA educators as they develop their curriculum. In social studies and English, the Mark Twain House and the Harriet Beecher Stowe Home both contributed to curriculum development efforts. The Connecticut Science Center and Hammonasset State Park have also contributed to the environmental science curriculum. These connections have not, as yet, had a direct impact upon scholars at CTRA through outreach programming or field trips to these locations. Efforts to encourage parent partnerships to support student learning are not yet being realized. The challenge of the diverse sending town structure create the unique dilemma of how to ensure parents participate in school committees and decision-making. Although there have been attempts to address this situation the solution is unclear. CTRA has begun to challenge itself to attempt new methods to invite parents to become partners in educating the scholars of CTRA, as in the new communication initiative at registration and the decision to move post-secondary planning meetings to sophomore year, but these efforts are not providing significant benefits to scholars yet. When CTRA has effective partnerships with all community resources, scholars will enjoy a richer educational experience that applies beyond their time in school and transfer their learning into action in the world thereby realizing the mission of the school.

Sources of Evidence
- self-study
- community members
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Commendations

Commendation

The staff's response to the needs of scholars in an environment where personal contact is an important part of the school's culture

The creation of an advanced manufacturing program which grows CTRA in a new direction

The ample equipment available for the delivery of the curriculum

The quality technology and support all educators and scholars receive from IT services and the school

The principal's ability to manage fiscal collaboration among a unique collection of school leadership groups

Commendation

The unique and well-maintained facility which allows the educators and scholars to work in comfort and safety to accomplish their magnet themes

The impeccable cleanliness of both facilities in hallways, restrooms, and classrooms

The research vessel which allows scholars to explore the river environment as they learn about the CT River environment

Commendation

The financial support of Goodwin College, which provides high quality services to the scholars and educators of CTRA

Commendation

The collaborative budget process which includes the input from a variety of stakeholders including faculty, principal, LEARN, and Goodwin College staff

The principal's ability to coordinate many different agencies to provide an ubiquitous financial umbrella that supports the entire CTRA community as they chart the next phase of their school's development

Commendation

The first class learning environment where all scholars and educators can realize their teaching and learning goals

The ability for all students to access all areas of the campus regardless of physical ability

Commendation

The inclusion of sustainability in the facility plan to express a major theme for CTRA in the physical plant and river access

Commendation

The compliance with all legal authorities in safety protocols with organized and detailed plans

Commendation

The diligence of Goodwin maintenance staff in maintaining all school facilities of the highest caliber

Commendation

The close relationship with Goodwin College as a pathway for future learning for scholars

Commendation

The support garnered from business and industry leaders to support the development of the advanced manufacturing program

Standard 7 Recommendations

Recommendation

Develop and publish a plan of the long-term goals of CTRA so that all stakeholders can have input into the future direction of the school community and coordinate school programming for long-term improvements to the educational program

Recommendation

Develop a long-term plan for capital improvements and expansion and communicate it to the entire learning community, including parents

Recommendation

Develop and implement programs that increase parent engagement in the decision-making process of the school

Recommendation

Grow further community partnerships throughout the sending region to ensure all students have a pathway to post-secondary success

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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

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

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

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

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

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

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

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

Roster of Team Members

Chair(s)

Chair: Mr. Scott Leslie - RHAM High School

Assistant Chair: Dr. Christopher Lord - Peabody School District

Team Members

Jill Baranowitz - Torrington High School

Hope Evanoff - Lincoln High School

Dante Gonzales - Marine Science Magnet High School of Southeastern Connecticut

Rebecca Hayes - Arts at the Capitol Theater

Nicholas Ives - Mark T. Sheehan High School

Melissa Jacobs - Quinebaug Middle College

Jason Magao - Vernon Public Schools

Jennifer O'Brien - Ledyard High School

Zulma Santana - Wilby High School

Victoria Sargeant - Shelton High School