

**New England Association of
School and Colleges, Inc.**

Commission on Public Schools



Commission on Public Schools

**Report of the Visiting Team for
East Lyme High School**

East Lyme, CT

03-20-2022 - 03-23-2022

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School and Community Summary

School and Community Summary

East Lyme High School, located in East Lyme, Connecticut, serves the villages of Niantic and Flanders and the neighboring town of Salem. Located on Long Island Sound, midway between New York and Boston, East Lyme is a charming seaside village community on the Connecticut shoreline. Salem, a quiet rural community, lies between Hartford and the seashore. Since the town of Salem does not have its own high school, approximately 165 Salem students attend East Lyme High School.

With a combined population of 22,906, the communities are economically, racially, culturally, and ethnically similar. East Lyme has a much larger population of 18,693, with minority groups comprising 18.3 percent. 12.4 percent speak a language other than English at home. Salem has a smaller population of 4,213, with minority groups making up 15.5 percent. The median family income is \$95,217 in East Lyme and \$109,460 in Salem.

Local industry includes management, business, financial occupations, education, health services, sales, engineering, office and administrative support, and food services.

Much of the population in all three communities are employed in the following industries: construction; professional, scientific, and technical services; chemicals; transportation equipment; utilities; public administration; educational services; health care; and accommodations and food services. In 2019, the unemployment rate was 6. percent for East Lyme/Niantic and 2.0 percent for Salem. Currently, 18.5 percent of the high school population and 21.1 percent of the school population live below the low-income level/qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch. Bride Brook Health and Rehab Center, the East Lyme Board of Education, York Correctional Institution, Super Stop & Shop, and numerous restaurants are major employers for all three towns.

In addition to East Lyme High School, with a population of 986, East Lyme Middle School includes 759 students. The integrated preschool program consists of 66 students, and AIM, the post-grad special education program, has 20 students. Three elementary schools house 334, 263, and 231 students for a total of 2,659 students in the East Lyme School District.

The East Lyme School District is ranked just below the median percent of school districts in the state in terms of per-pupil expenditure and expended \$18,053 per pupil compared to the average state expenditure of \$17,748 per pupil in 2019-2020. In 2020-2021, state, federal, and other resources accounted for 17.73 percent of all funds received in the district, leaving 82.27 percent of funding to be obtained through local resources. 67.97 percent of local property taxes were allocated to public schools. Two students paid nonresident tuition fees of \$18,509 each to attend East Lyme High School in 2020-2021.

East Lyme High School includes students in grades 9-12, with a total enrollment of 987, with 503 students identified in the student information system as male, 484 as female, and one as non-binary. Students attend school for 181 days. There are 109 faculty members at East Lyme High School, creating an adult-to-student ratio of 9:1. The faculty comprises 94 classroom teachers, six school counselors, two school psychologists, two social workers, two literacy specialists, two interventionists, and one library/media specialist. The ethnic, racial, and cultural composition of the 2021-2022 student body is 4 American Indian/Alaskan Native students, 2 Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students, 14 African American students, 94 Asian students, 76 Hispanic/Latino students, and 60 students who identify as two or more races. The average dropout rate for the past two years has consistently been less than 1.0 percent. The average daily student attendance rate for 2020-2021 was 91.5 percent during a predominantly hybrid school year and 93 percent to date in the 2021-2022 school year. The average attendance rate among teachers is 87.4 percent during a year when teachers are expected to stay home when not feeling well or isolated when positive.

There are many student recognition programs at East Lyme High School. At the end of each school year, an awards ceremony honors students in all grades for their academic and community achievements. The ceremony includes recognition from organizations such as the Connecticut Association of Schools, the Connecticut

Interscholastic Athletic Conference, the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, National Merit, and various Book Awards. Approximately \$88,000 is distributed amongst 55+ graduates from the internal/local Scholarship Program. Scholar athletes receive CIAC recognition, and the Chamber of Commerce awards community involvement.

From 2016 to 2021, 72 percent of high school graduates reported that they planned to attend a four-year college after graduation. Fourteen percent indicated that they planned to enroll in a two-year college, 3 percent reported entering directly into the workforce, 1 percent reported joining the military, and 7 percent were undecided/unknown.

East Lyme High School has partnerships with several colleges in the area: Three Rivers Community College, University of Connecticut, and Connecticut College.

Core Values, Beliefs, and Vision of the Graduate

[East Lyme High School Vision and Mission](#)

East Lyme High School

Mission Statement

The East Lyme High School experience prepares students academically, emotionally, and socially to be positive forces in the world and to live purposeful, healthy, and satisfying lives.

Vision of the Graduate

East Lyme High School strives to graduate students who are:

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS

- able to write and speak clearly for a variety of purposes
- adept at conveying ideas with mindfulness and purpose
- confident in advocating for solutions, suggestions, theories, actions, and themselves
- skilled at academic and interpersonal discourse across multiple forms of media and digital platforms

PRODUCTIVE COLLABORATORS

- ready to work effectively and respectfully for a diverse audience and with a diverse team
- able to adapt and perform a variety of roles and responsibilities within a group
- capable of sharing ownership of the successes and failures of a group
- able to deliver cooperative and responsible contributions to groups

DEEP THINKERS AND ACTIVE LEARNERS

CONTRIBUTING CITIZENS

- able to respond to both success and failure with reflection and resilience
- competent at posing and pursuing substantive questions
- effective at interpreting, critiquing, and synthesizing information
- ready to identify and solve problems by exploring resolution and designing solutions
- designers of innovative ideas, products, and original content
- proficient in a variety of subject areas and are well-rounded students
- willing to become community servants and leaders aware of the needs and issues of society
- capable of establishing persistent positive relationships aimed at caring for local organizations and programs
- generous with their knowledge and skills by caring for their community
- caretakers of a diverse array of school clubs and civic organizations
- capable of being open-minded and respectful towards the perspectives of others
- practitioners of habits that promote physical and mental wellbeing
- adept at executing ethical, informed, and responsible decisions

Vision Statement

The East Lyme High School faculty and staff respect the integrity of each student. We acknowledge the uniqueness of individual needs, capabilities, and perspectives. We challenge all students to hold high expectations for their learning, moral values, and physical wellbeing. Equally compelling is our belief that students should make responsible decisions, be proud of their achievements, and accept the ramifications of their actions.

Providing a safe learning environment that addresses the needs, expands the abilities, and encourages all students' aspirations is paramount. By presenting diversified and flexible curricula, this school offers multiple opportunities for all students to obtain a comprehensive education. We are committed to providing the tools and inspiration necessary for our students to become life-long learners.

It is our conviction that education is a dynamic process. Therefore, our students prepare for the future not merely by acquiring knowledge but by creating their own learning opportunities, realizing their aptitudes, and attaining their goals. Our culture of trust fosters self-confidence and responsibility, thus inspiring students to be intrinsically motivated.

East Lyme High School recognizes the value of diversity and the universality of human experience. We ask students to examine their own beliefs and those of others to develop a sense of global awareness and responsibility, thereby promoting an acceptance of and respect for every member of society. We encourage exemplary citizenship in our students by promoting participation, service, and leadership.

LEARNING CULTURE

Learning Culture

The school provides a safe learning culture that ensures equity and fosters shared values among learners, educators, families, and members of the school community. These shared values drive student learning as well as policy, practice, and decision-making while promoting a spirit of collaboration, shared ownership, pride, leadership, social responsibility, and civic engagement. The school community sets high standards for student learning, fosters a growth mindset, and facilitates continuous school improvement to realize the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate.

1. The school community provides a safe, positive, respectful, and inclusive culture that ensures equity and honors diversity in identity and thought.
 - 1a. The school community provides a safe environment.
2. The school's core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate drive student learning, professional practices, learning support, and the provision and allocation of learning resources.
 - 2a. The school has a written document describing its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate.
3. The school community takes collective responsibility for the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional well-being of every student and can demonstrate how each student is known, valued, and connected to the school community.
4. The school community's professional culture demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement through the use of research, collaborative learning, innovation, and reflection.
5. The school's culture promotes intellectual risk taking and personal and professional growth.
6. The school has an inclusive definition of leadership and provides school leaders with the authority and responsibility to improve student learning.
7. The school culture fosters civic engagement and social and personal responsibility.

STUDENT LEARNING

Student Learning

The school has a vision of the graduate that includes the attainment of transferable skills, disciplinary/interdisciplinary knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary to prepare learners for their future. Students are assured consistent learning outcomes through a defined curricular experience and have the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in a variety of creative ways. Students actively participate in authentic learning experiences while practicing the skills and habits of mind to regularly reflect upon, and take ownership of, their learning.

1. The school has a vision of the graduate that includes the attainment of transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success and provides feedback to learners and their families on each learner's progress in achieving this vision.
2. There is a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments that includes units of study with guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, and skills and integrates the school's vision of the graduate.
 - 2a. There is a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments.
3. Curriculum ensures that learners demonstrate a depth of understanding over a breadth of knowledge.
4. Instructional practices are designed to meet the learning needs of each student.
5. Students are active learners who have opportunities to lead their own learning.
6. Learners regularly engage in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills.
7. Learners demonstrate their learning through a variety of assessment strategies that inform classroom instruction and curriculum.
8. Learners have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning, receive corrective feedback, and use this feedback in meaningful ways to support their learning.
9. Learners use technology across all curricular areas to support, enhance, and demonstrate their learning.

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

Professional Practices

The school maintains and implements a school improvement/growth plan, organizational practices, and productive community relationships to meet and support student learning needs. Educators engage in ongoing reflection, collaboration, and professional development to improve their practice and examine evidence of student learning and well-being to improve curriculum, instruction, assessment practices, programs, and services.

1. The school engages all stakeholders in the development and implementation of a school improvement/growth plan, which reflects the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate.
 - 1a. The school has a current school improvement/growth plan.
2. Educators engage in ongoing reflection, formal and informal collaboration, and professional development to improve student learning and well-being.
3. Educators examine evidence of student learning and well-being to improve curriculum, instruction, assessment practices, and programs and services.
4. Collaborative structures and processes support coordination and implementation of curriculum.
5. School-wide organizational practices are designed to meet the learning needs of each student.
6. Educators develop productive student, family, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support learning.

LEARNING SUPPORT

Learning Support

The school has timely, directed, and coordinated interventions for all students. The school provides targeted supports to meet each student's individual needs, including counseling services, health services, library/information services, and other appropriate support services to assist each student in meeting the school's vision of the graduate.

1. All students receive appropriate intervention strategies to support their academic, social, and emotional success.
 - 1a. The school has intervention strategies designed to support students.
2. All students receive counseling services that meet their personal, social, emotional, academic, career, and college counseling needs from adequate, certified/licensed personnel.
3. All students receive health services that ensure their physical and emotional well-being from adequate, certified/licensed personnel.
4. All students receive library/information services that support their learning from adequate, certified/licensed personnel.
5. Identified English Language Learners and students with special needs and 504 plans receive appropriate programs and services that support their learning from adequate, certified/licensed personnel.

LEARNING RESOURCES

Learning Resources

The school has adequate and appropriate time, funding, and facilities to support the realization of its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate. The school and school community provide time, funding, and facilities for student learning and support; teacher collaboration and professional growth; and full implementation of curricular and co-curricular programs in the school. The school has appropriate plans, protocols, and infrastructure in place to ensure consistent delivery of its curriculum, programs, and services.

1. The community and district provide school buildings and facilities that support the delivery of high-quality curriculum, programs, and services.
 - 1a. The community and district provide school buildings and facilities that support the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services.
2. The school/district provides time and financial resources to enable researched-based instruction, professional growth, and the development, implementation, and improvement of school programs and services.
3. The community and the district's governing body provide adequate and dependable funding to fully implement the curriculum, including co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities.
4. The school/district has short-term and long-term plans to address the capital and maintenance needs of its building and facilities.
5. The school has infrastructure and protocols in place to ensure effective responses in crisis situations.

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 that seek voluntary affiliation.

The governing body of the Association is its Board of Trustees, which supervises the work of three Commissions: the Commission on Independent Schools (CIS); the Commission on Public Schools (CPS), which is composed of the Committee on Public Elementary, Middle, and High Schools (CPEMHS), and the Committee on Technical and Career Institutions (CTCI); and the Commission on International Education (CIE).

As the responsible agency for matters of the evaluation and Accreditation of public school member institutions, CPS requires visiting teams to assess the degree to which schools align with the qualitative Standards for Accreditation. The Standards are *Learning Culture*, *Student Learning*, *Professional Practices*, *Learning Support*, and *Learning Resources*.

The Accreditation program for public schools involves a five-step process: the Self-Reflection conducted by stakeholders at the school; the Collaborative Conference visit conducted by a team of peer educators and NEASC representatives; the school's development and implementation of a growth/improvement plan; the Decennial Accreditation visit conducted by a team of peer educators and NEASC representatives; and the follow-up program carried out by the school to implement the findings of its Self-Reflection, the recommendations of the visiting team, and those identified by the Committee in the follow-up process. Continued Accreditation requires that the school participate in the Accreditation process over the ten-year cycle and that it shows continued progress addressing identified needs.

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit

Accreditation Coordinators and a steering committee composed of the professional staff were appointed to supervise the school's Accreditation process, including the Self-Reflection, the Collaborative Conference Visit, the development and implementation of a School Growth/Improvement Plan, and the Decennial Accreditation Visit. At East Lyme High School, a committee of professional staff members, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the Accreditation process.

A public school seeking Accreditation through the Commission on Public Schools must complete appropriate materials to assess its alignment with the Standards for Accreditation and the quality of its educational offerings in light of its core values, beliefs, vision of the graduate, and unique student population. In preparation for the Decennial Accreditation Visit, the school must complete a School Summary Report to inform the team about its progress since the Collaborative Conference Visit.

In addition, the professional staff was required to read and come to a consensus on the School Summary Report to ensure that all voices were heard related to the school's progress on their Priority Areas for Growth.

The Process Used by the Visiting Team

A visiting team of eight members was assigned by the Commission on Public Schools to conduct a Decennial Accreditation visit to East Lyme High School in East Lyme, Connecticut. The visiting team members spent four days at the school; reviewed the Self-Reflection, Collaborative Conference, and School Summary Reports; met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students, and parents; and visited classes to determine the degree to which the school aligns with the Commission on Public Schools' Standards for Accreditation and the degree to which the school is making progress toward its identified Priority Areas for Growth as indicated in the school's Growth/Improvement Plan.

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 in each report section. The report contains 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 implement its plan for growth and improvement. The report also includes an analysis of the conceptual understanding, commitment, competency, and capacity (4Cs) - a framework used to evaluate the school's ability for continuous growth and improvement as a learning organization.

This report of the findings of the visiting team will be forwarded to the Commission on Public Schools, which will make a decision on the Accreditation of East Lyme High School.

Foundational Element 1.1a - Learning Culture

Foundational Element 1.1a

The East Lyme High School community has established a safe, respectful, and student-centered learning environment. The student body as a whole enjoys the school's welcoming and accepting environment. Visitors are greeted by a team of security personnel. The school's security team are retired officers who receive visitors and students in a very positive and helpful manner. Security personnel staff a desk at the front entrance of the school logging arrivals of guests and students who enter after school begins. The team is present in the hallways and throughout the building during school hours. Even with the presence of security, it is evident that teachers and all adults establish a relaxed relationship with students, welcoming them and helping them feel connected to their school. Student comfort and feeling of safety in the building are without question, and students highlight their deep belief in the open and respectful culture that exists between students and staff. Students who are chosen to be part of Peers Reaching Out (PRO) welcome guests and students who are visiting for events and tours. The entry to the school as it leads into the Commons sets a welcoming tone for students and visitors alike. The Commons is an essential part of the culture of the school as it affords a gathering place before school, during lunch, after school activities and practices, as well as evening events.

In addition to the Commons, the school hallways, classrooms, and meeting areas reflect the culture and talents of the student body. The atmosphere is inclusive, with posters that draw attention to upcoming events and meetings that speak to the diversity of students and their interests. Student artwork is pervasive throughout the hallways and meeting rooms. The student-created daily news production is featured on the numerous screens throughout the building. Samples of student work and publications are featured and available in the building and represent the consistent high-level work of the biweekly newspaper - the Viking Saga, the Viking Saga website, and the Fine Arts magazine. The reflection of the student body in every aspect of the school atmosphere lends itself well for students to embrace the evident academic and social-emotional support. School personnel and students are also psychically safe; there is a full range of cameras, internal locks on classroom doors, staff-only secure entrances that require key fobs, and two-way radios to support any crisis.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 1.2a - Learning Culture

Foundational Element 1.2a

East Lyme High School has successfully developed, approved, and implemented a vision of the graduate since the time of the Collaborative Conference Visit in 2019. In addition to producing the vision of the graduate, the school has ensured, in a relatively short time, that it permeates the culture of the school. The vision of the graduate is posted in all classrooms and school offices and meeting rooms. Called the Viking Voyage, the vision of the graduate and the process of individualized measuring of the skills have served as regular topics in the school's weekly advisory. With support from teachers and their advisors, students are selecting artifacts that demonstrate mastery of the transferable skills of the vision of the graduate and uploading them into e-portfolios through Naviance. Students cite both pride and perseverance when they describe the finished works of quality that are uploaded. An image to identify each of the main indicators of the vision of the graduate is being developed and will become a visual representation used not only as a quick reference but also as a feature on assessments that may be potential artifacts for students to include in their e-portfolios. The student handbook includes the East Lyme High School vision statement, learner expectations, and the recently adopted vision of the graduate. The school's mission, "The East Lyme High School experience prepares students academically, emotionally, and socially to be positive forces in the world and to live responsible, purposeful, and healthy lives," appears on the website, among course expectations, and in other school documents and is accepted by the school community as a declaration of the expectations of the East Lyme High School graduate.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 2.2a - Student Learning

Foundational Element 2.2a

Currently, there is not a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments that includes units of study with guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, and skills. However, East Lyme High School has begun significant planning and has made progress in the initial completion of curriculum in an agreed-upon, common format. The format also includes the incorporation of the transferable skills of the vision of the graduate. Under the supervision of the assistant superintendent, efforts have been made with the support of the curriculum instructional leaders (CILs) to assess the curriculum for every course in departments and move the completed curriculum to the Teaching and Learning Hub, a common area that can be accessed digitally. In addition, the CILs are working with teachers in their departments to ensure adherence to the common template comprising units of study with guiding essential questions, concepts, content, and skills. While the curriculum is in various stages of completion, a five-year revision cycle has been adopted by the district, along with an expected timeline for completion for most departments.

Rating

Does Not Meet the Standard

Foundational Element 3.1a - Professional Practices

Foundational Element 3.1a

East Lyme High School has a school improvement plan that is aligned with the district improvement plan. The plan outlines four major areas of growth for the district and each school in the district and includes social-emotional learning; blended learning; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and engagement and curriculum. Each goal is written from a district perspective and includes what is considered the student problem that prompts the goal, the structure that will be used to meet the goal, and identified standards of effective practice that will be evidence of meeting the goals. For the high school and other schools in the district, three sections serve to describe specific actions to be taken to meet each of the four district goals. The first section outlines various solutions in the form of theories of actions that are expected to be in place to meet the goals. The second section contains student outcomes, many of which are written in terms of expected percentages of success in the end-of-the-year school climate survey. The third section indicates the staff and the structure that is expected to be in place to support the efforts in achieving the goals. As the school goals are based on district goals, there is a clear sense of coherence as to common and unified expectations of district and school improvement. In addition, the goals at the building level are appropriately school-specific and relevant to the student population and inform the decision-making in the school on the part of the administrators, curriculum instructional leaders (CILs), and the teachers.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Elements 4.1a - Learning Support

Foundational Elements 4.1a

The school has a strong and effective system of intervention strategies designed to support students. Despite a dramatic increase in students' mental health and wellness needs as a recognized concern on the part of schools and communities regarding the well-being of students, East Lyme High School offers a range of formal and informal timely and coordinated systems of support to meet student needs. The school has proactive measures and necessary supports in place to meet the needs of students. It has achieved this through the addition of faculty members, e.g., a new full-time school social worker, and a shift to a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) that includes certified interventionists in math and literacy. Teachers, other faculty members, and staff members can refer students of concern using academic and behavioral records for the referral process.

A student study Team (SST) meets weekly to discuss and plan interventions for students experiencing social or emotional challenges. Similarly, a crisis management plan provides direct intervention to students in need. School counselors, teachers, and support staff work as a team to provide interventions to qualifying students through IEPs and 504 plans. Coastal Connections, an alternative learning program, provides a non-traditional high school experience in which students are afforded internships within the community several days per week and complete their graduation requirements.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 5.1a - Learning Resources

Foundational Element 5.1a

The community and district continue to ensure that the school building and facilities of East Lyme High School support the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services in a safe, secure, and healthy environment. East Lyme High School has unique spaces that support student learning and the curriculum, including an indoor swimming pool, a restaurant-grade culinary lab, a built-in marine biology tank, a digital music lab, a turf field, and a relatively new gym and bleachers. The school's defining space is a communal space for socializing and gathering, referred to as the Commons. This multi-purpose area speaks to a culture that supports students' social-emotional and academic needs as well as their interests. The facilities are very clean and well maintained, meet all applicable federal and state laws, and comply with local fire, health, and safety regulations.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Elements Ratings

Foundational Element Ratings

Foundational Elements	Collaborative Conference School's Rating	Collaborative Conference Visitors' Rating	Decennial Visit School's Rating	Decennial Visit Visitors' Rating
1.1a - Learning Culture	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
1.2a - Learning Culture	Does not meet Standard	Does not meet the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
2.2a - Student Learning	Does not meet the Standard	Does not meet the Standard	Does not meet the Standard	Does not meet the Standard
3.1a - Professional Practices	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
4.1a - Learning Support	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
5.1a - Learning Resources	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard

Priority Area 1

Priority Area

Priority Area #1: East Lyme High School will formalize its vision of a graduate and ensure that students are aware of the transferable skills, content, understandings, and dispositions, and demonstrate the development of these qualities throughout high school.

(1.2a - The school has a written document describing its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate.)

Action, Impact, and Growth

East Lyme High School has successfully created and implemented the Viking Voyage. This highly effective and well-communicated design identifies the school's vision of the graduate. It outlines a clear method for students to upload individual artifacts of their choosing that highlight and demonstrate mastery of each of the transferable skills.

A key area of growth for the school since the time of the Collaborative Conference Visit in 2019, the impressive vision of the graduate identifies and defines the transferable skills that students are expected to master during their high school career. The school district has effectively communicated these skills to the school community and has developed an articulated manner of collecting artifacts from students to demonstrate their progress in understanding the skills and the level of mastery of the skills throughout their experience at East Lyme High School.

At the time of the Collaborative Conference Visit, the school showed its strong commitment to core values and beliefs about learning that were highlighted in the acronym, REACH, i.e., Responsibility, Empathy, Achievement, Collaboration, and Honesty. Though the school used the lens of REACH to promote behavioral expectations to students, the school had not yet adopted a vision of the graduate that spoke to a set of skills that would be encouraged and measured throughout the high school experience and identified as dispositions necessary for future success.

Since the time of the Collaborative Conference Visit, the school has systematically engaged in a highly methodical, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research and best practices to identify and commit to the skills that now serve as the basis for the school's new vision of the graduate.

In October 2019, shortly after the Collaborative Conference Visit, three teachers and an administrator from the school attended a vision of the graduate workshop sponsored by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The team of four committed to identifying a set of skills as the basis of the school's vision of the graduate and established a draft set as initial ideas. To involve the school community and stakeholders in further developing the vision of the graduate, the team planned and implemented an abbreviated version of the workshop for the school leadership team, comprising the curriculum instruction leaders (CILs). A large group of stakeholders including staff members, parents, board of education members, and administrators from East Lyme and the sending district, Salem, worked together during a full day of planning to prioritize the most important skills for the graduates of East Lyme High School. The school also repeated identifying transferable skills with student advisory groups representing all four grade levels. Throughout the process, skills were identified and grouped into common categories among the stakeholders and then examined by the CILs and each department to propose and review ideas used to generate and adopt the final version.

Agreeing upon indicators and descriptors for each of the chosen four skills was tasked to administrators and CILs to present a draft vision of the graduate. In January 2020, the draft was shared at the department level for feedback, proposed edits, and adoption. In May of 2021, the East Lyme Board of Education supported the vision

of the graduate. As a result of a highly inclusive process, the vision of the graduate includes an agreed-upon list of transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success. Through a well-planned, formal, and inclusive process, the school has identified *effective communicators*, *productive collaborators*, *deep thinking and active learners*, and *contributing citizens* as the skills of the vision of the graduate, along with descriptors for each of the skill areas.

Ensuring that the skills are known and understood by all community members has been a priority for the school. The vision of the graduate is a concise, one-page document that is posted throughout the school. Future iterations will include graphics that highlight each skill in a quickly identifiable format. Large picture posters of students demonstrating each skill adorn the school's hallways.

With effective planning and a commitment to using the weekly advisory period as the initial means of communication, the school has effectively promoted the vision of the graduate to all members of the school community. Through the advisory, the student population has been introduced to the Viking Voyage, East Lyme High School's procedure for articulating the vision of the graduate as well as the method for uploading artifacts. Students have an exceptional understanding of and commitment to the Viking Voyage. The Viking Voyage is now an integral part of the school culture, and it is gaining ground as being fundamental in classroom instruction and assessment. Teachers are committed to making the vision of the graduate part of everyday language in the classroom and are interested in hearing from students how the skills and attributes can be infused into the daily classroom experiences.

As a result of the efforts in initiating the Viking Voyage, the school has successfully identified a formal way to collect individual artifacts connected to each of the skills of the vision of the graduate. This process is also the primary means of meeting the State of Connecticut's Mastery Based Diploma Assessment that will be required, beginning with the Class of 2023. The students upload artifacts into a digital portfolio through Naviance. They are expected to correspond to and provide evidence of their acquisition of one or more of the vision of the graduate skills. The goal is to track individual student progress over time, confirming mastery of each skill that ultimately ends in a senior reflection on the portfolio. Over the first three years of implementation, student expectations include uploading a set number of artifacts based on their current grade, with the goal of 14-16 artifacts beginning with the Class of 2025.

Students are encouraged by teachers and advisors to choose and upload academic class assignments that are identified as strong samples demonstrating a mature level of attainment of one of the skills of the vision of the graduate. In addition to academic work, students are encouraged to upload videos, music performances, artwork, descriptions of service hours, and narratives addressing involvement in school activities, clubs, civic organizations, or athletic teams. In addition, students are urged to include work selected for the school's printed publications, such as its newspaper - the Viking Saga, the Valhalla yearbook, or the fine arts magazine, among other sources. In the future, a stamp or seal will be placed on assessments indicating to students that the particular work assigned would be appropriate to be added to the student's digital portfolio. As a result of this comprehensive list of artifacts that are acceptable evidence of the skills and the plan to identify assessments as possible artifacts, the expectations of the vision of the graduate and the Viking Voyage, in a short time, are understood by all members of the school community. At this time, the district is committed to finding ways to embed the skills of the vision of the graduate into curriculum and instruction practices in every classroom.

In a very short time, the school has developed a remarkable vision of the graduate and initiated a clear and impressive plan to collect evidence from all students supporting the personal achievement of the skills of the vision of the graduate. While the school has a formal and effective way of collecting artifacts, there is not yet a systemic plan to uniformly assess the level of the artifacts in meeting individual learners' progress toward the achievement of the vision of the graduate. Once there is a clear and uniform way to assess individual artifacts, the school should explore ways to share an annual report on whole-school progress toward learner achievement of the vision of the graduate. As the vision of the graduate is incorporated into the new and revised curriculum, the school should continue with discussions at the district level in making the vision of the graduate a developmentally appropriate tool, Pre-K-12.

Recommended Next Steps

Create and implement a systemic plan to uniformly assess and report to families the level of the student-submitted artifacts in meeting individual learner progress toward the achievement of the vision of the graduate

Develop and implement an annual report on whole-school progress toward learner achievement of the vision of the graduate

Prioritize discussions at the district level in utilizing the vision of the graduate as a developmentally appropriate tool, Pre-K-12

Sources of Evidence

- department leaders
- priority area meetings
- priority area observations
- school board
- school leadership
- student work
- students
- teachers

Priority Area 2

Priority Area

Priority Area #2: East Lyme High School will actively teach resilience, risk-taking, and perseverance; address concerns over students' level of anxiety; increase ungraded opportunities to show mastery of skills or objectives.

(1.3 - The school community takes collective responsibility for the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional wellbeing of every student and can demonstrate how each student, is known, valued, and connected to the school community, and 2.7 -Learners demonstrate their learning through a variety of assessment strategies that inform classroom instruction and curriculum.)

Action, Impact, and Growth

While maintaining high expectations for all students, teachers have made significant progress in addressing the level of anxiety in students and focusing on resilience and perseverance in the student population. The professional staff has addressed student mental health and wellness concerns through a number of formal and informal strategies expressing a commitment to foster resilience, risk-taking, and stamina in students, as well as empowering students to make their own decisions - ones that best suit their individual academic and career interests.

Through an organized holistic approach, the students are beneficiaries of programs and school-wide enhancements that support their learning. These programs, including a weekly advisory, among numerous strategies, have been designed with the specific aim of allowing students to strike a balance between a positive school experience and a healthy lifestyle.

Prior to the pandemic, the school had expressed concern over students' level of stress, their focus on grades, and their overall mental health and wellness. Acknowledging the recent urgency this issue has presented, the professional staff has made significant progress in establishing a school-wide commitment to reducing the level of anxiety amongst the student population. The school has increased the advisory period to a weekly 30-minute advisory in which students are grouped with the same advisor for four years. Advisories have been combined to allow two members of the professional staff to work together with a group of students. In addition to a weekly agenda provided by the advisory committee that includes timely topics, the advisors assist students with the Viking Voyage and are prepared to ensure that students have a guaranteed connection with an adult for four years. During the advisory just prior to the Connecticut SAT Day for juniors, advisors remind students to charge laptops in advance and offer last-minute advice, but, more importantly, encourage students to remain calm and do their best while remembering that the first SAT experience is considered a single snapshot in the overall portfolio of a student. As a result of the commitment to the expanded advisory period, students are known by at least one adult mentor who assists them not only in achieving the school's vision of the graduate but also in helping to ensure that students' wellness concerns are addressed.

As a school that offers numerous Advanced Placement (AP) classes, there is a strong check and balance system in encouraging students to achieve while addressing concerns over anxiety. Students are excited about AP offerings, enjoy the rigor, and see the AP classes as a path to competitive colleges. There is an overall agreement in the school community that challenging oneself academically is an important element in a child's education, but there is also knowledge of the strong correlation between anxiety and stress levels and the ability or inability of students to handle academic work. At the same time, teachers understand the need to rebuild students' level of engagement and stamina and balance the concern over stress after a return to a full year of weekly classes after the various hybrid learning schedules and models that existed in the past. Teachers acknowledge that instruction and instructional expectations have been modified to meet students' current levels and recognize the need to address time management and work expectations to ensure that students are progressing.

During the annual course selection process, school counselors are cognizant of concerns and work to decrease the stress level caused by overloading individual schedules with AP classes, and classroom teachers regularly engage in conversations about recommendations for courses. In addition, any student wishing to take more than four AP courses must first meet with the principal in an interview, during which a discussion of interests and life balance is the topic of conversation.

To help alleviate student mental health concerns among the entire population, the 2021-2022 school year saw the addition of a second full-time high school social worker. There is a consensus in the school community that the two full-time social workers, one of which was a contracted employee in the past and now hired directly by the school, have been effective in supporting and identifying students who might be at risk as well as those who lack coping skills to deal with issues of concern. The social workers, along with the two full-time school psychologists, attend freshman health classes to discuss signs of depression and anxiety during suicide prevention week as a way to not only address the entire freshman class but also as a way to introduce themselves to the newest members of the school community and encourage students to reach out to them as needed.

Classroom teachers support the reduction of anxiety and address the students' emotional needs. The school has implemented the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA). The DESSA ratings are completed three times per year and allow the school's support staff to identify students who many need social and emotional support. Teachers know that their support staff partners work in conjunction with them to provide important services to identify and address the mental health needs of students as needed. As a result, teachers can focus more on instructional needs.

Addressing the desire to increase ungraded opportunities for students to show mastery of skills has been accomplished through the implementation of the Viking Voyage for which students self-select work that, in their opinion, demonstrates mastery of one or more of the skills of the school's new vision of the graduate. Students are required to upload artifacts and ultimately complete a reflection of their work in their senior year. Teachers are working to include the skills of the vision of the graduate in all new and revised curricula which will ultimately create more opportunities for these types of mastery-based learning opportunities.

Informal opportunities to reduce stress and anxiety include the school's Virtual Calming Room website. Meant as a way to focus attention on relaxation and breathing exercises for students and adults, the site is easy to access on the school's new ClearTouch boards that will be in all classrooms by the end of 2022. The district's and the school's administrators have also shown concern over the stress of the faculty and staff members. The school has begun the Educator Social-Emotional Reflection and Training (EdSert), providing all faculty members with the opportunity to reflect on their own social and emotional competencies to allow them to better model and address these competencies for students. Ensuring that teachers' emotional well-being is a priority for both the school administrators and the teachers.

To address the concerns of students' academic stresses for those who are behind in their coursework, the school has transitioned to a Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS). The MTSS team has supplemented instructional assistants and teaching assistants who provided SRBI support in the past with an administrative coordinator and certified math and literacy teachers. With referrals from teachers, counselors, parents, and students, the program addresses academic needs and has had a significant impact on building resiliency among students as the team works to provide the tools and resources students needed to fill any academic gaps. Also important is the prevailing student belief that the MTSS is a safe space. Students do not feel singled out and the program is non-judgmental as it is actively praised and encouraged as an option in the school community. There is support to grow the MTSS program in additional areas of academics beyond just math and literacy. There is also strong backing to expand this formalized support program to include social and emotional care and development for students who need a focused approach for attention in both academic areas and wellness support.

The Academic Resource Center (ARC) is an additional support program serving a population of 80 students who benefit from homework and project support with the guidance of teachers who provide mentorship and individualized instruction. The ARC services the academic needs of students by providing them with a quiet, calming setting where they feel at ease while completing their assignments.

Housed in a separate building, the Coastal Connection Program can support a maximum number of 25 students. The program is tailor-made for those students who are not comfortable in the large comprehensive setting at the school. The program is purposefully planned for maximum flexibility to meet the unique learning styles of its student population. This program is designed to provide students with authentic work and real-life world experiences by offering an array of opportunities to acquire skills in areas ranging from the medical field to restaurant work. The program effectively addresses the specific social-emotional needs of its student population.

An indication of the school's healthy environment is the open discussion of issues that may cause concern or anxiety to a segment of the student body or to the whole of the school community. Students are encouraged to voice concerns that address the equity and inclusion of the various populations in the school. To the school community's credit, the voices of students who represent various diverse groups are not silenced but heard, acknowledged, and, most impressively, shared with the whole school community. The school welcomes and appreciates the voices of what could often become marginalized populations in other schools. These voices have resulted in impactful student-led training for the faculty and staff on a number of issues including micro-aggressions, racial bias, use of student pronouns, and transgender concerns. The adults of the school recognize the importance and are committed to addressing the concerns of students and see it as a sign of strength that they are willing to listen and learn from their own student population. There is a strong sense of unity, empathy, and acceptance in the East Lyme school community. The evidence of a concern for the well-being of students is apparent – and it is the school's most admirable trait.

The Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) has met with tremendous success. The school should expand and develop the MTSS programming in additional academic areas beyond math and literacy and expand programming to meet students' needs for social/emotional support. The work to alleviate stress in students has been laudable. The professional staff is poised to expand ways to balance the level of stress and anxiety in students with their need to challenge themselves academically. As well, in the process of caring for the concerns of students, the school should maintain a focus as a learning community on alleviating the stress of teachers and staff members and supporting their social/emotional needs.

Recommended Next Steps

Expand and develop the Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) programming in academic areas beyond math and literacy, and expand programming to meet students' needs for social-emotional support

Expand ways to balance the level of stress and anxiety in the school community by addressing the social-emotional needs of students with their need to challenge themselves academically as well as the adults who work to support students

Sources of Evidence

- department leaders
- priority area meetings
- school leadership
- school support staff
- school summary report
- students
- teachers

Priority Area 3

Priority Area

Priority Area #3: East Lyme High School will complete all curriculum in a common format.

(2.2a - There is a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments.)

Action, Impact, and Growth

While there is not a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments that includes units of study with guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, and skills, most departments at East Lyme High School have significant planning in place and continued progress in completing the curriculum in a common format. Completed curriculum can be found on the school's Teaching and Learning Hub, and each department has a district-approved action plan and timeline for completion of curriculum.

A new assistant superintendent began in July 2021 and reviewed with the school's curriculum instruction leaders (CILs) the existing curriculum and what had been the timeline for the curriculum revision process. The CILs were tasked with uploading all existing curricula to a centralized location, referred to as the Teaching and Learning Hub. A hub is now a common place for storing completed curricula for all departments. The purpose of the hub is to serve as a central filing system for faculty across the district to access teaching and learning documents. Teachers find the hub to be a particularly useful resource for new teachers and those teachers who are teaching courses for the first time. Moving curriculum from multiple locations in private files to the hub has aided the CILs in determining their departments' current stages of curriculum development.

The East Lyme Public Schools has established a five-year curriculum revision calendar along with action plans for each department. The CILs meet individually with the assistant superintendent to determine their departments' current placement in one of four stages: program review (PR), initial implementation (II), systemic adoption (SA), or systemic implementation (SI). The CILs develop curriculum action plans for the current school year, which assist in determining the amount of professional development or summer hours needed to continue the curriculum alignment process. The board of education curriculum budget has been aligned each year to the school district's curriculum revision cycle. Funding is planned and available for writing during the summer, after school, or during scheduled release time. The district has planned for a significant number of hours in the 2022-2023 budget as the expectation is for departments to make strong gains in revising and writing in the expected common format post-pandemic.

The school has taken initial steps to utilize the common format for all written curricula. In the summer of 2021, professional development time was granted for the CILs to give feedback to the assistant superintendent in order to finalize new curriculum templates. The committee aimed to create templates that followed the Understanding by Design (UbD) format and integrate standards that emphasized the goals of the district and high school, while also maintaining a straightforward, manageable format. The result has been two common templates for curriculum: an overarching curriculum map template and an implementation guide template. For each unit, teachers identify guiding/essential questions, content area standards, critical content, key skills, and assessments. Another expectation is to infuse social-emotional learning (SEL) standards, technology International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) standards, and social justice/equity standards in the future. With the recent completion of the vision of the graduate, a future expectation is to link the transferable skills to assessments, prompting authors of the maps to find or develop deliberate connections to the vision of the graduate. In preparation, the social studies department, which is in the SI phase, has administered a student survey centered on the vision of the graduate skills that will inform their upcoming curriculum revisions. Conversations have been ongoing about weaving the vision of the graduate into the curriculum, Pre-K-12, for maximum vertical alignment, but this plan is not yet in action.

The school is working to improve interdisciplinary connections and authentic learning experiences. For example, a social studies teacher has developed lessons on homelessness in an inquiry-based human rights course, and a science teacher is utilizing the many real-world applications of the AP Environmental Science course, including environmental justice, legislation, and global impact.

The templates have several key aspects that are specific to the district's and the school's improvement plan, including the incorporation of blended learning opportunities. The district is also reviewing the state's guidelines for remote learning, which may increase the opportunity for students to experience certain courses that are not currently available.

The CILs are in the process of sharing the new templates with their departments. Depending on the department, the templates are in varying stages of implementing the common format. The continuation of the familiar UbD framework at the heart of the template has confirmed to teachers that the current curriculum work is truly about revision and formatting for alignment rather than a complete start over of their efforts. Teachers support the efforts of the assistant superintendent, who has been available via email to answer questions and aid in crafting curricula for nontraditional or unique courses. Some professional development time has been devoted to curriculum writing and revision. Departments will occasionally use their monthly PLC meetings for curriculum writing, as well. The assistant superintendent meets one time per month with CILs to discuss curriculum updates and progress. Teachers appreciate the organization in the systematic planning and structure for curriculum revision. The principal desires common planning time for department members. While it would be highly unlikely for complete departments to have the same common planning time, the professional staff believes that smaller groups within a department could likely have time together for the purpose of curriculum planning, writing, and implementation.

The current focus for curriculum writing is an emphasis on the completion of the curriculum for A-level courses, as the school is moving toward greater alignment between levels. It is expected that the A-level course map should not differ greatly from a B-level course map. Discussions of reducing the number of B-level courses offered are ongoing with the purpose of ultimately exposing all students to the same level of rigor and expectations.

Teachers view the templates and the curriculum writing process positively. They also view curriculum documents as living documents that are to be continuously updated through collaboration and reflection. They agree that the process of writing and revising the curriculum has been invigorating, helping them to create equitable experiences across sections of the same course taught by different instructors. The process of writing curriculum is just as important to teachers as the final document uploaded to the Teaching and Learning Hub. They are aware of the positive impacts of revising and finalizing the curriculum, including the alignment and implementation of common assessments for courses with different teachers.

Many teachers believe that their ideal curriculum is one that encourages 80 percent alignment between sections of the same course, with about 20 percent of the course being more flexible and leaving room for teachers to utilize different resources and vary some content as long as the same essential questions and skills are being addressed. This balance, which they feel is supported faculty-wide, allows for meaningful differences in lessons, maintains teacher autonomy, and creates opportunities to address specific student needs or interests. Teachers also find that curriculum development has led to meaningful conversations within and between departments about common language and terms.

Students are engaging in curricular practices that emphasize authentic learning experiences and higher order thinking. Students find that assignments and assessments range from creating a Google site exploring the historical context of *The Great Gatsby* to participating in a Constitutional Convention simulation after researching and writing about a historical figure each student then embodies. In a pre-calculus class, students take on the role of the teacher as they prepare lessons on various discrete math topics. Students also regularly share and discuss assessments that encourage revision and reflection. The teachers, even as the curriculum is being developed and completed, are ensuring that learners experience deep understanding through project-based learning and authentic learning experiences.

Teachers and administrators acknowledge that many departments are still in the early stages of completing curricula for all courses in a common format. The assistant superintendent emphasizes that the next steps of the process include deep-diving into program review, providing professional development for curriculum writing, training teachers on the common format, and ultimately working toward a complete set of curricula in the Teaching and Learning Hub that will be accessible not just to faculty, but also to the community.

Faculty members consistently discuss the curriculum using phrases such as “draft” and “work in progress” and are committed to the important work of purposeful curriculum writing. Admirably, the district is not interested in simply moving information from one document format to another. Instead, East Lyme High School is working to make a meaningful shift by collaborating, reflecting, and revising.

The desire to write curricula is apparent among teachers and departments; however, available time is the largest obstacle. The school needs to identify and dedicate sufficient time and resources for curriculum revision, writing, and evaluation as well as the necessary professional development and training to revise and or write meaningful curricula. As the school is committing to curricula for A-level courses, it may also consider the de-leveling of certain courses in which there is a distinction between level A and level B in order to provide challenging academic experiences for all learners, as well as opportunities for students to learn with or from students who are different from them in select heterogeneously grouped courses.

Recommended Next Steps

Identify and dedicate sufficient time and resources for curriculum revision, writing, and evaluation as well as the necessary professional development and training to revise and write meaningful curricula

De-level courses in which there is a distinction between level A and level B in order to provide challenging academic experiences for all learners, as well as opportunities for students to learn with or from students who are different from them in select heterogeneously grouped courses

Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- department leaders
- priority area meetings
- school leadership
- school summary report
- teachers

Priority Area 4

Priority Area

Priority Area #4: East Lyme High School will evaluate and restructure the responsibilities of school counselors so that students will have better access to them and better use of building support staff, ensuring that individual counselors devote the necessary time to support each of their students academically, emotionally, and socially.

(4.2 - All students receive counseling services that meet their personal, social, emotional, academic, career, and college counseling needs from adequate, certified/licensed personnel.)

Action, Impact, and Growth

In line with a dramatic increase in the mental health and wellness needs of students and a recognized effort on the part of schools and communities to address the well-being of students, East Lyme High School offers a range of formal and informal timely and coordinated systems of support that addresses both the success of students and the well-being of the student population. With intervention strategies in place and numerous processes to identify students who need additional assistance, the school has proactive measures and necessary supports in place to meet the needs of students.

At the time of the 2019 Collaborative Conference, the school was examining the impact of addressing a wide variety of student needs on the ability of the school counselors to service all students appropriately and in a timely manner. The desire to examine the responsibilities of the counselors in order to define and clarify responsibilities and expectations was identified as a priority, to allow for the most beneficial manner of genuinely servicing the academic and social-emotional expectations of students. Taking the broadest view possible in reviewing all services, the school has taken a variety of steps to examine and restructure many aspects of student supports while still paying attention to the responsibilities of the six school counselors. This effort has increased the counselors' ability to work more effectively and efficiently with their students, holding regular meetings with students that provide personal, emotional, academic, and college counseling.

The district has started to review and revise the school counselor job description, which is currently in draft form. In addition to the second social worker from one contracted worker to two district employees, the school now utilizes an administrator to oversee the school's 504 cases as well as programming for the Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS). The school has included two certified teachers to staff the Academic Resource Center (ARC). The school has adjusted certain policies related to the course selection process specifically related to class overrides and elective course changes in an effort to allow school counselors to redistribute their time at the start of the new school year. As well, the school counselors will be involved in future curriculum writing to support the new Connecticut School Counseling Framework in order to prioritize student support specific to the needs of the school.

In addition to the six school counselors, the school employs two school psychologists, and, as of the 2021-2022 school year, one additional social worker for a total of two full-time social workers. The school also has one part-time drug and alcohol counselor. The additional social worker has helped meet the counseling needs of students who are scheduled for support through 504 plans. One social worker is assigned grades 9 and 11 and the other grades 10 and 12. The social workers meet with 25-30 students on an individual or group basis, meeting multiple times each week in the group and individual sessions with students who struggle emotionally. The additional social worker has also helped to provide further support to the students in the Therapeutic Learning Program (TLP), which includes 15 students. In addition to the two social workers who support the students in the TLP program, there are also a full-time certified special education teacher and two teacher aides. There is strong support in the school community for the additional social worker as it is felt that the position contributes positively to being able to work to address the growing mental health needs of the student body.

There is a lack of proximity of the school support staff to each other, particularly the school counselors, the psychologists, and the social workers, who are housed in different areas of the building. The professional staff envisages a wellness center to group support staff together and foster an overall wellness approach to student services. The hope is for greater communication and coordinated student response among the counselors and support staff; however, space issues are currently a barrier to creating an appropriate space in the building.

For the 2021-2022 school year, a 504/multitiered system supports (MTSS) administrator position was specifically created to help alleviate some of the burdens placed on the school counselors. The responsibilities associated with this role in direct relation to the 504 process continue to evolve. Currently, the 504/MTSS administrator is tasked with overseeing and conducting the initial 504 meetings and the more complex 504 annual review meetings. School counselors still attend these 504 meetings. It continues to be a collaborative effort between the 504/MTSS administrator and school counselor when the accommodations are updated in the Frontline 504 platform. School counselors have remained as the case manager for all of their 504 students. At times, school counselors are responsible for sending out the updated copy of 504 plans to teachers and families, and, at other times, the school counseling department's administrative assistant completes this task. The school counselors find that they need additional support when scheduling 504 meetings and updating documents to allow for greater access to counseling time with students.

In addition to the responsibilities related to 504 accommodation plans, the 504/MTSS administrator supervises the Multi-Tiered System of Supports referral system, which is a formal, defined process used to identify and refer students who need additional academic assistance. By revising the intervention referral system, school counselors and teachers are quickly able to identify students who may be in need of additional support in the areas of reading, writing, or math and to bring those names forward for further information to establish an intervention support system that provides Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. In the 2021-2022 school year, 81 students are being reviewed by the MTSS team and are flagged for potential concerns in ELA, while 69 students have been reviewed for potential concerns in math. With the addition of the 504/MTSS administrator to take lead on this team, a more streamlined and organized process is in place. The MTSS team meets on a weekly basis; alternating weeks are dedicated to addressing students with math needs and students with literacy needs.

The school currently has three reading intervention specialists - one of which also dedicates time towards tier 1 literacy coaching - and a new math intervention specialist as part of the MTSS team. The math specialist was hired through the support of grant funding with the intention of supporting this position in the future with budget funds. Once identified through the MTSS referral process, students are connected with reading or math intervention specialists who schedule weekly meetings during the students' study halls to provide additional instruction in their area of need. The literacy and math intervention specialists administer the Star Reading and Star Math assessments three times per year, in the fall, winter, and spring, to measure the growth of each identified student as well as to continue to work to identify additional students of need. The interventionists also use a variety of other assessments to measure students' areas of need and to track growth.

The math intervention specialist is currently working directly with 14 students identified through the MTSS referral process, and all 14 students have made progress in their fall to winter Star math scores. In addition to these 14 students, the math interventionist is working with 34 students in a drop-in capacity to provide math assistance. The combined student load of the three reading intervention specialists is 54 students; 41 are receiving direct reading instruction and 15 students have made progress from their fall to winter Star reading scores. As students achieve either "benchmark" or "on watch" scores via STAR assessments and demonstrate progress on intervention activities, they are exited from direct MTSS support and are kept "on watch" to continuously monitor their progress. At the end of each school year, the team plans to dismiss students from the "on watch" monitoring program if they have continued to show growth.

Prior to the 2021-2022 school year, the Academic Resource Center (ARC) was staffed by non-certified personnel that included two instructional assistants and one teaching assistant. As this model proved to be less effective than desired; as of this school year, two certified teachers now staff the ARC. One of the reading specialists, the math specialist who also works with the MTSS intervention program, and a teaching assistant also offer ARC support. The ARC program currently has 75 students enrolled with a capacity to support up to 80 students at 10 students per period. There is a quicker response time when students are seeking literacy or math support

through ARC for specific assignments. Parent feedback shared through 504 meetings reflect positive reviews concerning the support and additional structure ARC is able to provide their children.

The school continues to contract with a drug and alcohol counselor to further support the needs of the student body and assist in the work of the support staff. The drug and alcohol counselor works with identified students through the efforts of Project Courage.

The change in course override policy beyond the end of the current school year has been effective in helping to decrease the time that school counselors previously spent in the fall addressing those students who wished to change course placement. Often the change in course has been due to required advance summer work that may be incomplete at the start of the school year. As a result of establishing set deadlines for course changes, a cultural shift has begun on the part of students and families toward the override process and requests for course changes are now timelier for counselors and course planning. The revised policy also limits changes in the elective course selections to the beginning of the school year, which has been beneficial to school counselors' maintaining balanced class rosters and prompting students to be more thoughtful in the initial course selection process.

Through a multitude of efforts, professional adults – *caring adults* - with the support of the school's and district's leaders, continue to develop plans and services that identify and support the academic, social, and emotional needs of students. The school has developed dynamic and flexible support systems for students. Review assignments of all support staff members to allow for the best use of time in meeting the diverse academic, social, and emotional needs of students. The school should continue to explore ways to alleviate counselors' time constraints in order to ensure that regularly scheduled meetings take place with students in order to provide personal, social, emotional, academic, career, and college counseling. As the school is committed to writing and revising the curriculum in a standardized format, school counselors should be included in curriculum writing and training to support the new Connecticut School Counseling Framework.

Recommended Next Steps

Ensure the best use of time in meeting the diverse academic, social, and emotional needs of students by reviewing and adjusting the assignments of all support staff members

Fully alleviate counselors' time constraints in order to ensure that regularly scheduled meetings take place with students in order to provide personal, social, emotional, academic, career, and college counseling

Include school counselors in curriculum writing and training to support the new Connecticut School Counseling Framework

Sources of Evidence

- priority area meetings
- school leadership
- school support staff

Priority Area 5

Priority Area

Priority Area #5: East Lyme High School will address significant budget shortfalls by budgeting support for technology infrastructure to enhance classroom instruction by specifically ensuring consistent access to the internet and network, along with adequate personnel specifically designated to support this access.

(5.3 - The community and the district's governing body provide adequate and dependable funding to fully implement the curriculum, including co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities.)

Action, Impact, and Growth

The community has provided East Lyme High School with appropriate individual and classroom equipment and technology, adequate technology support, and an increase in technology training. At the time of the 2019 Collaborative Conference, the school did not offer 1:1 student devices for computer access; nevertheless, at the time, it was believed by the majority of the professional staff that the school's library/media center provided adequate access to laptops, desktops, and iPads for student use. In the last two years, the school has provided 1:1 individual technology for all students and teachers. Dell mobile laptops were provided to all teachers and students in 2020. The district initially budgeted \$466,900 for student laptops, \$307,125 for teacher laptops throughout the district, and \$160,000 to assist with blended learning.

The 1:1 program has been a significant upgrade in the school's technology, and teachers and students are pleased with the equipment. Devices continue to be used regularly throughout all classrooms, and teachers maintain Google Classrooms for student assignments and classroom use. Additional laptops are available for loan in the library/media center should students have an issue with their assigned laptops. The acquisition of mobile devices has ensured a level of equity among all students and provides layers of flexibility in inclusive teaching practices.

ClearTouch boards were selected to replace the aging Smartboards in all classrooms. Approximately 60 percent of the classrooms have been equipped with the ClearTouch boards, and the technology department's goal is to fully complete the transition by the end of 2022. While teachers and students are satisfied with the ClearTouch boards, not all students can see the boards, because the boards are placed on mobile stands. Due to the layout of furniture in certain classrooms, viewing the boards can be difficult. There is a plan to mount the ClearTouch boards on the front wall or a selected wall in the classroom, but that has not yet been implemented. Training has begun for those teachers and staff who have the ClearTouch boards already in their classrooms. Also, students do not have the ability to print at school or at home; instead, students must sign in to school desktops in the library/media center to access cloud-based drives in order to print, which is an inconvenience to many students.

Additional access points throughout the school are providing better classroom access to Wi-Fi for staff and students, addressing an issue that was a concern at the time of the 2019 Collaborative Conference, when it was felt that unreliable Wi-Fi impeded lessons that incorporated technology, often resulting in hesitancy on the part of teachers to utilize technology in their classrooms. With improvements to the Wi-Fi, teachers now regularly have students utilize the laptops during classroom activities. There remain Wi-Fi connection difficulties in only a few areas of the school, including the gym and the student commons, where Wi-Fi can be unreliable.

In order to provide reliable technology support, the district hired a technology lead in September 2021 from Custom Computer Specialists. This company provides contracted service to the school and oversees technological support district-wide. There is a full-time technology support position housed at the school; however, a recently vacated instructional technologist position that offers support for classroom instructional technology strategies has not been filled at this time.

The school has increased technological platforms that are specifically designed to assist in student learning, including Membean, a vocabulary platform that is used in all English classes. The school uses Naviance to upload artifacts and assessments that support evidence of students' mastery of the transferable skills of the vision of the graduate. Using Infinite Campus, the expectation is that students will be able to check their progress in coursework on a regular basis and find updated grades and missing assignments. The school is making a commitment to technology use in the classroom through blended learning opportunities. It is expected that the identification of blended learning opportunities will be included in each curriculum as it is revised. There are also expectations for blended learning as part of regular classroom instruction in the district and school goals. The school improvement plan anticipates that, in the 2021-2022 end-of-year survey, 90 percent of students will likely report being proficient at accessing and utilizing Google Classroom, Infinite Campus, and Naviance for academic success. The improvement plan also predicts that 90 percent of students will report utilizing a variety of learning activities throughout the school day including the use of technology-based platforms. The improvement plan also expects that informal observations and learning walks will provide evidence of a variety of learning activities including the use of technology-based platforms.

The school has acquired a central hub, Classlink, to house the many apps and various online platforms that support the increased desire to promote blended learning. The school is in the early stages of the development of the Teaching and Learning Hub to serve as a central filing system for the curriculum and the sharing of department materials and designs for blended learning. The school and district professional staffs are interested in remote learning, based on state-developed guidelines.

As a result of a strong commitment to technology equipment, along with a plan to increase support and training, the school has made tremendous growth in providing student students with a wide range of technology programs and opportunities. Continuing this trajectory of growth is a desire indicated and supported by the teachers as well as school and district administrators.

The school has made a strong commitment to supplying individual laptops, improving Wi-Fi access throughout most of the building, and the acquisition of ClearTouch boards for the classrooms. The school should continue to provide staff with the training and access to the full instructional potential of the ClearTouch boards as well as training that supports the development of blending learning opportunities in curriculum development.

Recommended Next Steps

Provide the professional staff with the training and access to the full instructional potential of the ClearTouch boards

Provide the professional staff with training that supports the development of blending learning opportunities in curriculum development

Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- classroom observations
- department leaders
- facility tour
- priority area meetings
- school leadership
- students
- teachers

Part 3 - Reflection on Student Learning

Reflection on Student Learning

Instructional practices are effectively designed to meet the diverse learning needs of each student at East Lyme High School. Instructional strategies target individualized and personalized learning for all students. The program of studies describes courses offered on four levels including general (B), college prep (A), honors (H), advanced placement (AP), and various college partnership programs that include the University of Connecticut's Early College Experience (ECE), College Career Pathway (CCP) program with Three Rivers Community College, the Three Rivers High School Partnership Program, and Connecticut College's New London Scholars Program. Teachers at all levels are committed to consistently monitoring their students' progress. Teachers regularly use formative assessments to inform and drive instruction. In integrated science, students use Google Docs to record a daily journal entry that teachers can review before the next day. In Spanish classes, teachers utilize Gimkit to gauge students' understanding before summative assessments. World language teachers use assessment data to measure students' understanding of standards-based skills. During PLC meetings, math teachers analyze student performance data to plan for instruction. Teachers structure their lessons to provide all learners with access to rigorous learning opportunities. In Advanced Placement classes, teachers purposefully provide rigorous formative assessment opportunities to expose students to testing experiences similar to the AP exam. There is a strong culture of teacher support for students who require or want extra help at the high school. Teachers provide students with additional support and are accessible and able to meet with them throughout the day, during study halls, and after school. Teacher accessibility is considered a priority by the faculty. Teachers are often proactive in reaching out to students to encourage additional help. Several informal and formal Tiers of support are provided to both monitor and assist in ensuring a rigorous learning experience. The 1:1 Chromebooks have had a positive impact on establishing structured routines and expectations for students and providing teachers with a new tool to support their students. In English classes, the inclusion of Google Classroom and Google Docs has enhanced the revision stage of the writing process. The use of Google Classroom and helping students organize and manage their schoolwork also provides students with timely and meaningful feedback from their teachers. Google Classroom provides a common resource for support staff. Improvements have been made to the school's networking infrastructure, which have improved the reliability and accessibility to the internet, which is important for a 1:1 laptop environment. As a result of the improvement to the wireless network, teachers have been able to incorporate more technology into their instructional practices. Platforms used by teachers include Kahoot, Peardeck, and Nearpod to actively engage students and strategically gauge student learning. To remain current with advancements in technology, the professional staff knows that cyclical and reliable funding for the repair and renewal of the high school's technology will be essential. Nevertheless, there have been marked improvements since the 2019 Collaborative Conference.

Students are active learners who have opportunities to lead their learning throughout various classes in all departments. Provided with various authentic personalized learning opportunities, students have choice in assessments and personalized experiences to demonstrate learning. In English classes, students include personal perspectives in writing assignments. In woodworking, students personalize their final product while demonstrating the acquisition of knowledge and application of woodworking skills. Students design a model car in chemistry using a renewable energy source. In Coastal Connections, which is a non-traditional high school program inspired by the Big Picture Learning model, students are provided personalized, relevant, and authentic learning experiences with the support of advisors, parents, and mentors who are often from local businesses. Students in the program can pursue personal interests by participating in community internships. Students in grades 11 and 12 can participate in (Can you spell out the full name before the acronym?) WISE - an independent study research course in which students select a faculty mentor to support them in conducting in-depth research on a topic of their choice guided by essential questions, daily journals, and a time log. Students in WISE culminate their experience with a presentation to their peers showcasing their research. In the TV Broadcast News course, students are responsible for developing and broadcasting a daily morning show broadcasted throughout the school. Students collaborate each day to choose topics to report during the A1 Morning News. Students are evaluated on their contributions to the broadcast through project portfolios. In all

classes, students can reflect on their work, selecting only their best work as artifacts for the Viking Voyage portfolio to demonstrate their growth in areas of effective communication, productive collaboration, students as deep thinkers, and citizenship. During the school's expanded advisory program, students can choose and upload artifacts to support progress toward the vision of the graduate through the Naviance portal. Students speak very highly of the self-reflection process and the opportunity to select and catalog their artifacts to monitor growth and demonstrate mastery of the skills of the vision of the graduate. Curriculum writing is now designed with the expectation that all units will delineate opportunities to optimize student choice and authenticity in active learning.

Learners regularly engage in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills. With the planned curriculum revisions, it is expected that teachers will explicitly communicate the connection between the assessment and the higher order thinking skill indicated in the descriptors of the vision of the graduate. Regularly, students in science classes develop a deeper understanding of content through lab experiments and demonstrations. Science teachers develop experiences in the classroom based on the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) framework designed to help students engage in three-dimensional inquiry-based learning that blends core ideas in science with engineering practices and crosscutting concepts. Students apply the NGSS framework across all subjects in science. In history classes, students participate in Socratic seminars and debates and are challenged to demonstrate their learning through project-based assignments. Students engage in inquiry and higher order thinking skills in physics by modeling investigations through claim, evidence, and reasoning to predict and explain lab investigations. In Journalism, students work as a team to create, design, and publish the student newspaper, The Viking Saga, and the accompanying website. Participating in various roles in the newspaper's productions, students incorporate questioning techniques to make meaningful connections as they begin to understand the impact of the topics they report. Journalism students practice and develop interviewing, investigating, and reporting skills in a real-world environment that emphasizes creative problem-solving and meeting deadlines. Once students have effectively learned skills specific to writing for the newspaper, students gain the freedom to contribute to sections of their interest. Students can increase their commitment to the newspaper throughout their high school years, taking on progressively complex roles requiring problem-solving and higher order thinking. To ensure that each role in the development of the paper is adequately filled each year, interested students shadow students in current roles to learn the expectations of the desired role. During advisory, with the assistance of teachers, students often engage in activities that spark conversations designed to deepen their understanding of the world around them; for instance, students engage in discussions relevant to women's history in the labor force. Students who develop meaningful connections from their experiences can deepen their understanding by enrolling in various elective course offerings, Advanced Placement course offerings, Early College Experience course offerings available through the University of Connecticut, and other college partnership programs. Career Concentrations pathways allow students interested in a particular career to explore courses that prepare them for potential employment or future study in that field. Each concentration has a credit requirement consisting of both required and elective courses.

Learners at demonstrate learning through a wide variety of planned and coordinated assessment strategies that inform classroom instruction and, as a result, are increasingly designed to allow students to demonstrate proficiency or mastery of the transferable skills of the vision of the graduate. Students speak about their learning experiences with a great sense of pride and confidence. Students have the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in various creative ways. For example, students showcase their learning by interviewing local political candidates regarding an important community issue, researching genetic disorders, participating in a simulation of the Constitutional Convention, completing crime scene forensic investigations, and assuming the role of the teacher with prepared lecture notes, practice problems, and solutions to instruct peers. Students are invited to share their learning with authentic audiences including students, families, community members, and professionals. Students from the art department have work on display at the Shoreline Arts Alliance. Several band students participate in annual competitive adjudications and performances in regional music festivals and other collaborative concerts. The school has created and embraced the A1 Morning News, a daily student-led news broadcast projected on monitors and shared with students and faculty members throughout the school. Students are diligently working to master the skills identified in the school's vision of the graduate. The community has agreed that these skills are needed in current academic life and students' futures. The school is devising a way to universally communicate the skills of the school's vision of the graduate to be assessed before each assessment. The creation of a symbol for each skill will be placed on assessments and units of study that correspond to one of the skills. Student learning artifacts include essays, political cartoons, artwork, films, and

newspaper articles and are being used for college applications and portfolios. These experiences are authentic measures of students' learning and prepare them for life after high school, increasing awareness of potential career options or hobbies. Many of these learning experiences encourage students to take risks and ownership of their learning. In some cases, students are provided specific and measurable criteria for success, such as rubrics, models of exemplar work, and checklists. Students find that these assignments promote collaboration, communication, and leadership skills. Often, the assessments prepared by teachers are common formative assessments and include do nows, exit slips, interactive games, self-reflections, and think-pair-shares which provide checks for understanding and inform instruction. Teachers create opportunities for student choice in assignments. The Viking Voyage, in which students choose work to upload artifacts of schoolwork or school experiences, has opened doors in this process. Informally, teachers often work with and support students individually or in groups to differentiate the support that leads to challenging learning experiences for all students. More formal support is available to students who need additional support in math, English, and executive functioning skills with access to the school's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). The Academic Resource Center (ARC) is available for students with identified learning needs through an individualized education plan (IEP) or a 504 plan.

Feedback is essential for growth and learning at East Lyme High School. Students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate understanding and receive feedback from various sources to improve their work. Self-reflection and peer reflection were both goals for curriculum development during the 2019 Collaborative Conference. Student reflection is now evident throughout some courses and departments, even if it is still an informal practice. For instance, students in CAD class build trebuchet models and measure the distance a projectile travels. Students receive feedback from their peers and teacher to improve their designs and return to the technical education lab to adjust them. Students demonstrate a genuine interest in improving their work, even if they are already meeting a high grading standard. Students receive a wide variety of teacher feedback and peer feedback as part of the learning process. Students are afforded opportunities for test corrections, particularly in math, and they are allowed to revise writing assignments. Writing conferences with teachers are available, and corrective feedback is expected to be used in improving student work and guiding the next steps in learning. Peer editing, which is very viable in the 1:1 laptop environment, is a regular occurrence. In Print Journalism, student editors and chiefs provide feedback and critiques directly to student reporters who write articles for the Viking Saga school newspaper. Feedback to students and support for the revision of work allow for a very high level of student work in many courses and departments.

Learners have access to technology across all curricular areas to support, enhance, and demonstrate their learning. The school has successfully moved to a 1:1 laptop environment and is replacing Smartboards in the classrooms with new ClearTouch boards. Teachers are required to utilize Google Classroom, and student expectations include the completion and submission of assignments to teachers through Google Classroom. Google Slides and Canva are used for individual and group presentations, and Google Docs and Sheets are used for other assignments. Students have created a website on the historical context of *the Great Gatsby* using Google Sites. Students also create podcasts and blogs. Students use technology in informed, effective ways to research, share work, collaborate, peer-edit, and access grades and information. In addition, technology is well utilized to share work with audiences beyond the school community. The production of the daily morning news, the bi-weekly Viking Saga press, the Saga press website, and other student productions, including a fine arts magazine, all rely on technology to design and share to audiences in the school and the community. District administrators and the board of education are interested in using technology to expand learning beyond the classroom and the constraints of the school building and the school day. They are considering collaborating with other school districts using technology platforms to expand Advanced Placement courses with low enrollment and possibly add additional classes to address individual interests. The school is awaiting guidance from the State of Connecticut Department of Education on remote learning opportunities and expectations of such programming to make learning accessible in many locations and personalize the pace of learning. The tremendous and rapid growth of accessing and using technology in all aspects of courses at the school is very evident and fosters discussion that will lead the school in new directions of flexibility for all students.

Part 4 - Capacity for Continuous Growth as a Learning Organization

Conceptual Understanding

The teachers at East Lyme High School have defined and are committed to a common understanding of effective learning in the classroom. One high leverage strategy that is being implemented to support this work is a set of district goals within the East Lyme Public Schools Improvement Plan that serves as the basis for each of the identified goals of the district's schools. The impact of the school's goals based on the district improvement plan is evident and serves to support many of the initiatives and the Priority Areas for Growth on which the school has focused. The Priority Areas self-selected by the school (formalizing the vision of the graduate; actively teaching resilience and perseverance; addressing concerns over students' anxiety, increasing rigor for students; rewriting and revising curriculum and establishing a common format; reevaluating and restructuring the responsibilities of the school counselors; and addressing significant technology budget shortfalls) serve as a continuum that addresses the improvement of overall school services. Improving the quality of teaching and learning by meeting the needs of both the students and the teachers are accomplished with these carefully chosen goals. The agreement on effective learning encompasses initial planning for learning and funding of that learning, the detailed measuring of the success of students, and the specific concerns over both the academic progress of students and the wellness of students.

The school has a clear definition of effective learning in its vision of the graduate, the Viking Voyage. The journey toward its implementation and as a tool that defines learning began in the fall of 2019 when the school shifted from a behavioral- and character-based model to a transferable skills-based model. The newly identified skill set includes growing students who are effective communicators, deep thinkers and active learners, productive collaborators, and contributing citizens. While the district has not fully implemented the Viking Voyage, an impressive start is underway. The ultimate goal is to embed the skills in classroom experiences as young as Pre-K with a progression toward mastery prior to the student's high school graduation. Implementation is thoughtfully and strategically planned over the course of the next three years. The tool to collect artifacts is firmly in place as students upload artifacts of their mastery of the skills in an e-portfolio housed on the school's Naviance platform. Student instructions on and expectations concerning the process are shared during the weekly advisory period. In order for the vision of the graduate to become an integral part of every student's experience, the professional staff will need to immerse the language of the Viking Voyage into daily instruction and identify specific guaranteed experiences for all students in curriculum. However, in the short time period that has encompassed thoughtful development and impressive implementation plan, the school has a shared understanding of the role of the newly developed vision of the graduate and its ability to drive new performance assessments and classroom instruction.

There is an understanding of the need to revise, update, and write curricula in order to define optimal learning in every classroom. Teachers receive guidance, templates, and a schedule from the curriculum instructional leaders and the assistant superintendent. The school's curriculum is in various stages of completion; nevertheless, there is a clear five-year development plan comprising program review, initial implementation, systemic adoption, and systemic implementation. The completed curricula that have been updated and revised are housed in a newly constructed, central digital filing system, the Teaching and Learning Hub.

Commitment

The members of the East Lyme High School community are committed to embracing the school's vision of the graduate. Numerous stakeholders were engaged in the process of identifying the skills that comprise the vision of the graduate. Contributing stakeholders included central office administrators, building-level administrators, curriculum instruction leaders, teachers, students, and board of education members from East Lyme and Salem. After an extensive process in which drafts were shared and revised, the final vision was agreed upon and

approved by the board of education. As a result, there is a clear sense of ownership among teachers and students. The process to collect artifacts has begun, and the school has committed to formally include these skills as part of curriculum development and daily instruction. Additionally, the administrators and teachers agree that future work will address managing artifacts and determining an agreed upon level of mastery for submitted work that will serve as evidence of individual student achievement of the vision of the graduate and whole school progress toward achievement of the vision of the graduate.

A commitment to curriculum writing is clear, and all teachers and departments understand the expectations of the five-year cycle and the work that needs to be accomplished. Teachers have concerns about the amount of time necessary to accomplish the required tasks to complete the curriculum. The administrators desire common planning time for teachers who have expressed the need for professional development time strictly dedicated to curriculum writing. In the past, the lunch period in which the whole school was scheduled for the same lunch accommodated common planning time for departments; however, the current schedule requires careful planning to create the opportunity for faculty members to be together to write the curriculum during the school day. The desire for protected time in the master schedule and professional learning calendar to accommodate the curriculum illustrates the school's commitment to continuous growth in this area.

At the time of the 2019 Collaborative Conference, a growth mindset was evident in the culture of the school but there was a concern over balancing high achievement with the level of student anxiety. Since that time, the professional staff has fully committed to an awareness of students' levels of anxiety as well as purposefully addressing issues of mental health and wellness. The commitment by the counselors to address issues and the use of the advisory period to discuss student concerns are matched in the classrooms by teachers who have modified instructional practices to allow for revisions, test corrections, blended learning, and peer editing - all of which students express as very positive for their development. A growth mindset is evident in terms of the faculty's own development as practitioners.

East Lyme High School's commitment to the Standards for Accreditation is evident in the numerous opportunities that are created throughout the organization for students to build relationships with adults in the building, allowing for the social and emotional support needed for their success. The enhanced access to advisory periods that now meet weekly, the increase of student support staff, and the addition of a Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) and accompanying staff are all examples in which the school community makes it known that student-adult relationships are an essential part of the East Lyme High School experience.

Competency

The professional staff accepts and acknowledges that there are necessary enhancements in already strong programming in order to fully align with the Standards for Accreditation. In addition to the aforementioned need to provide feedback to learners and their families on each student's progress in achieving the vision of the graduate; complete curriculum in all courses in all departments; and continue to support the mental health and wellness of all students, the school has clear, high expectations for the future. Teachers and administrators have voiced the need to develop additional career pathways for students, explore elective options for students, and increase conversations on the effective use of standardized student data.

This school community is very well suited to tackle these self-identified improvement areas. The school has chosen long-term priorities for growth and at the same time identified future growth areas. With a highly professional faculty and a visionary administrative leadership team, the school is well suited to plan increased alignment with the Standards, advance the school's academic programming, and further develop supports for students.

The teachers cherish and care about the voice of students who are equal partners in improvement. The school community courageously acknowledges the need for discussions in honoring diversity, promoting equality, and encouraging the inclusion of all elements of the student population. The administrative team and faculty have encouraged student voices in leading adult training on issues of gender, use of pronouns, micro-aggressions, and racial diversity. The learning community celebrates that the talents from within the ranks of students, teachers, and administrators have the competency and the necessary skills to change and grow the already

positive and productive culture of the school.

Capacity

The school has many of the same challenges that all schools face. Teachers are lacking consistent and regular time for the ambitious curriculum revision cycle that is planned; however, the issue of time will likely be addressed with such enhancements as common planning time. The hope is to move past sporadic times throughout the year during PLC time, release time, or summer hours for the work. The capacity to complete all curricula for the high school is apparent through the resources and the urgency felt by the administrators and teachers.

Growing numbers of students are qualifying for 504 accommodations, special education IEPs, and additional mental health services. Additional support staff and supportive programming have provided some relief during a time when the school and community are constantly aware of the concerns of students' well-being. Even with additional resources and additional staff supported as much as possible by the community-at-large, the current existing relationships with students and the commitment of the adults at the school are the predominant factors that provide successful student support and will continue to address the increasingly complex needs of students.

Technology advances are very apparent throughout the building since the time of the 2019 Collaborative Conference. The school now enjoys 1:1 laptops, new ClearTouch Boards that are permeating the entire school, and vastly improved Wi-Fi access throughout most of the building. While there are concerns about expanding the adult skills needed to utilize the new technology, the school's self-expressed ability to advance together and even rely on student support only enhances this professional community.

As a learning organization, the school has made great strides in identifying barriers and seeking solutions to problems. Building the foundation for a shared vision of academic excellence and student well-being, along with a commitment to tackle the improvements to meet that vision, are hallmarks of East Lyme High School. This community and its children benefit from teachers, staff members, and administrators who are passionately devoted to the collective growth of East Lyme High School students. The school as a whole and specifically its teachers, with continued support from the town, have the commitment and capacity to meet every child's individual and unique educational and developmental needs.

This Decennial Accreditation Report for East Lyme High School rarely mentions the word "pandemic" throughout the previous sections. The remarkable achievements of the school since the time of the 2019 Collaborative Conference, which took place five months prior to the pandemic, have been so well planned and well-executed that the COVID-19 pandemic and the interruptions to student learning do not need to be mentioned as an excuse for a leveling off of planning or sustained improvement. Rather, during the pandemic, the trajectory of the school as a learning organization, which maintained focus on serious improvements while providing the most caring environment for students, is so evident that it is unnecessary to cloud this report with mention of the pandemic. The school needs no qualifying statement that the most important cycle between the Collaborative Conference Visit and the Decennial Accreditation Visit produced noteworthy successes while occurring during the most challenging time in the history of education.

With that said, the school can embark on the exciting work of completely immersing students in the Viking Voyage, by including the transferable skills into the cultural vernacular of the school, advisory, and classrooms. In addition, as the curriculum is revised, specific attention to the skills and guaranteed experiences and assessments for all students to be able to practice and meet the skills is essential. The Viking Voyage has become part of the school's culture, and it will become part of the community's culture as reports are shared in the individual level of mastery of the transferable and whole school progress in meeting the high ideals of the vision of the graduate. As the school looks to develop the opportunities to master the transferable skills, the desire for additional career pathways and courses that allow for full exposure to the skills will be a natural outcome.

Commendations

Commendation

The sense of community that pervades the school's culture, enhances the academic and social-emotional support for students, and features positive and productive adult-student connections

The atmosphere of the building that is student-friendly, inclusive, welcoming, and reflective of student interests and talents

The number of quality student-produced publications and productions including the Viking Saga, the Viking Saga website, the Fine Arts Magazine, and the morning news program

Commendation

The multi-step process that included school and community stakeholders and led to the vision of the graduate

The Viking Voyage, that, in a short time, has permeated the culture of the classrooms and the school and represents a highly organized and efficient way for students to collect artifacts in support of the vision of the graduate

The impressive rollout through the school's weekly advisory period of the Viking Voyage as a way to introduce the vision of the graduate to students

The thoughtful approach students are taking to uploading artifacts to support their achievement of the skills of the vision of the graduate as part of the school's mastery-based diploma assessment

Commendation

The concern of the school community over student anxiety and the attempts to assist students in reducing stress

The willingness of teachers to modify instruction with a focus on rebuilding the engagement and stamina of students

The Multi-Tier System of Support (MTSS) program that offers students assistance from three certified literary specialists and one certified math specialist

The appreciation for voices of the diverse student population that has resulted in impactful student-led training for members of the professional staff on issues including micro-aggressions, racial bias, use of student pronouns, and transgender concerns

Commendation

The completion of a district-wide curriculum common template, agreed-upon revision cycle, and the plan for departments to develop curricula that is completed in phases and available in the school's Teaching and Learning Hub

The commitment of the faculty to collaborate, reflect, and prioritize meaningful revisions to the curriculum

Commendation

The school district's commitment to fund and support additional support services staff to meet the mental health needs of students and alleviate some of the burdens on existing school counselors and support staff

The efforts of the student support staff to meet a wide variety of students' social-emotional, wellness, and academic needs

Commendation

The commitment to 1:1 technology, the increase in reliable Wi-Fi, and the addition of ClearTouch boards to replace aging technology

Commendation

The wide variety of assessments that feature student choice, the pursuit of personal interests, and opportunities for creative expressions

The multiple opportunities for students to participate in classwork that requires inquiry and authentic learning

The appreciation indicated by students for the opportunities to lead their own learning

The commitment to instructional practices and support services practices that meet the individual learning needs of students

The multiple opportunities students have to demonstrate learning after teacher feedback, peer review, and self-reflection

Additional Recommendations

Recommendation

Identify and dedicate time, such as common planning time, to put appropriate teachers together to complete the writing of the curriculum

Recommendation

Incorporate the skills of the vision of the graduate as an expectation in the curriculum

Recommendation

Ensure the most effective use of counselors and support services staff

Recommendation

Implement a plan to more efficiently use personnel to meet the increased student needs, such as instituting the “wellness center” suggested by the professional staff to bring together the school counselors, schools psychologists, and school social workers

Recommendation

Expand blended learning opportunities in curriculum development

Provide the remote learning opportunities for students that are being considered by school and district leaders

Ensure that there is sufficient training for staff in the technology applications and hardware

Recommendation

Immerse students in the Viking Voyage by including the transferable skills into the cultural vernacular of the school, advisory, and classrooms

Ensure that, as the curriculum is revised, the skills, guaranteed experiences, and assessments for all students to be able to practice and meet the transferable skills of the vision of the graduate are consistently and prominently incorporated therein

Expand additional career pathways and courses that allow for full exposure to the skills of the vision of the graduate

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

This Initial/Decennial Accreditation Report of the Visiting Team reflects the findings of the school's Summary Report and those of the visiting team. It provides a blueprint for the faculty, administrators, 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 administrators yearly of progress made in aligning with the Standards for Accreditation.

A school's initial/continued Accreditation is based on satisfactory progress implementing the school's improvement/growth plan based on the Priority Areas validated by the visiting team and recommendations 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, the Commission requires that the principal submit a First Report of Progress and Planning and routine Three- and Six-Year Reports of Progress and Planning describing the school's progress implementing the Priority Areas as well as submitting an updated improvement/growth plan. The Commission may request additional Special Progress Reports if one or more of the Standards or Priority Areas for Growth are not being met in a satisfactory manner, if additional information is needed on matters relating to the school's alignment with the Standards for Accreditation, or substantive changes occur in the school.

To ensure that it has current information about the school, the Commission has an established Substantive Change Policy requiring that principals of member schools report to the Commission within sixty days of occurrence any substantive change which impacts the school's alignment with the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The Report of Substantive Change must describe the change itself and detail the impacts 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 Reports on Progress and Planning and/or the Annual Information Report (AIR) which is required of each member school to ensure that the Commission office has current statistical data on the school.

The visiting team would like to express thanks to the community for the hospitality and welcome. The school community completed a Self-Reflection that clearly identified the school's strengths and areas of need, hosted a Collaborative Conference, developed an improvement/growth plan, and completed a Summary Report. The time and effort dedicated to the Accreditation process, school improvement/growth, the Summary Report, and the preparation for the visit ensured a successful Initial/Decennial Accreditation visit.

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES Commission on Public Schools

Principals of member schools must report to the Commission within sixty days of occurrence any substantive change in the school which has an impact on the school's ability to meet any of the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The Report of Substantive Change must describe the change itself as well as detail the impact 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. Paul Smith - East Hampton Public Schools

Assistant Chair: Ms. Jennifer Olson - Derby High School

Team Members

Jillian Barry - Rocky Hill High School

Ramsey Binnington - Cromwell High School

John Devany - East Haven High School

Mr. Paul Mezick - Daniel Hand High School

Ricardo Perez - Warren Harding High School

Lindsay Walker - Fairfield Warde High School