

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

Commission on Public Schools



Commission on Public Schools

**Report of the Visiting Team for
Northwestern Regional High School**

Winsted, CT

12-08-2022 - 12-09-2022

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School and Community Summary

School and Community Summary

Northwestern Regional High School is located in Winsted, Connecticut, and serves the towns of Barkhamsted, Colebrook, New Hartford, and Norfolk. The school is located in Litchfield County and is considered Regional School District #7. The district is composed of two public schools, a grades 7-8 middle school, and a grades 9-12 high school.

The four towns within the district have similar socio-economic and racial backgrounds. The data shows that 21.29 percent of the students are below the poverty level and eligible for free or reduced lunch. The four towns lack racial and ethnic diversity as 97.53 percent of the residents are white. The other 2.47 percent consists of Asians, African-Americans, and Hispanics. English is the primary language spoken within the communities.

As of the 2020-2021 school year, the school's enrollment consisted of 624 students. The school's population has been steadily dropping. Over the past five years, the school averaged 36 fewer students per year. The percentage of students who complete four years at Northwestern Regional High School is 96 percent. The graduation rate has been 100 percent. The annual dropout rate has been 0.0111 percent. Daily student attendance averages 96.3 percent. The average number of days absent due to illness or personal time for teachers is 4.5. The data shows that the graduating class of 2021 had 63 percent planning to attend four-year schools, 20 percent planning to attend two-year schools, 3 percent planning to attend a technical or trade school, 3 percent planning to enter the military, 5 percent planning to go directly into the workforce, and 6 percent were either taking a gap year or were undecided about post-secondary plans.

In 2020-2021, the school spent \$22,648 per pupil, above the state average of \$20,740. For the fiscal year ending 2021, Barkhamsted appropriated 46.8 percent of its local taxes for the school's budget while New Hartford appropriated 40.6 percent, Colebrook 29.6 percent, and Norfolk 22.2 percent. This varies from year to year depending upon the number of students sent from each town.

There are many educational opportunities available to students and the community including adult education, driver's education, agricultural education, and students in transitional educational placement (STEP), a course extension program. The school works with local businesses to provide authentic learning experiences for students. Some of these businesses include Northwest Community Bank, the Warner Theater, and Camp Jewell. The agricultural education program provides a supervised agricultural experience program at several local businesses such as the Winsted Animal Hospital, Tractor Supply, Moscarillo's Garden Center, and Barden Farm. In addition, the school partners with Northwestern Connecticut Community College and UCONN Early College Experience courses to provide students with educational opportunities beyond the traditional high school program.

Many student recognition programs exist. The National Honor Society inducts a large number of students every year. A list of honor students is published four times a year, but students are recognized for their achievements and talents in a variety of ways: sports awards at the end of each season, agricultural education awards ceremony, end-of-the-year awards in every academic discipline, music festivals, scholastic art awards, Halo awards for theater, Berkshire League and All-State awards, scholar-athlete awards, and good citizenship letters. In addition, students are often recognized for their service to the community as they participate in events such as blood drives, raising money for Kindness in Motion, food drives, and trick-or-treating on the hill.

Northwestern believes that it is important to celebrate students in a variety of ways. They are recognized for their individual achievements and their unique contributions to the school community. Northwestern recognizes the value of connection and the correlation between connection and school success. Northwestern offers 15 different clubs including Envirothon, Model UN, Social Justice, and GSA.

Core Values, Beliefs, and Vision of the Graduate

Mission Statement

Northwestern Regional High School fosters academic and personal excellence in every student. In partnership with families and communities, we create a safe learning environment dedicated to developing the skills of lifelong learning. Our dynamic and challenging educational program prepares individuals to respect diversity and become responsible citizens in a rapidly evolving global environment.

Core Values and Beliefs

WE VALUE ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

We believe in:

- high academic expectations
- commitment to lifelong learning
- innovative and independent thinking

WE VALUE THE PURSUIT OF PERSONAL EXCELLENCE IN ALL ASPECTS OF OUR LIVES

We believe in:

- acting responsibly with the interests of others in mind
- allowing student choice in the learning process
- giving students the opportunity to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways

WE VALUE GLOBAL AWARENESS

We believe in:

- taking an active role in a global society
- demonstrating respect for diversity

WE VALUE PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

We believe in:

- community involvement
- social responsibility
- open communication between the school and family

WE VALUE A SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

We believe in:

- developing bonds between students and staff
- demonstrating respect for ourselves and others
- taking educational risks by challenging oneself
- providing students the opportunity to be heard

Vision of the Graduate

A Northwestern Regional High School graduate will be a(n):

Effective Communicator and Collaborator: Graduates will demonstrate effective verbal and written communication, as well as other methods of relaying information, that gets a point across, as well as the capability to work with someone to produce or create a product.

Critical Thinker and Problem Solver: Graduates will be able to objectively analyze and evaluate issues in order to arrive at an informed position and/or conclusion.

Emotionally Intelligent Individual: Graduates will have the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to be skilled in handling interpersonal relationships judiciously and ***with kindness and empathy.***

Civic-Minded Citizen: Graduates will understand the idea that one's identity transcends geography or political borders and that as positive leaders, recognize that responsibilities are derived from membership in the broader class of humanity.

Passionate, Empowered Learner: Graduates will possess an intense desire or enthusiasm for learning, with an emphasis on academic ***integrity and honesty***

Persistent and Adaptable Thinker: Graduates will persist in doing something despite difficulty, obstacles, or delay in achieving success, and have the ability to adjust to new conditions.

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 who 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 own 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 show continued progress addressing identified needs.

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit - The School Self-Reflection

Accreditation coordinators and a steering committee composed of the professional staff were appointed to supervise the school's self-reflection and Accreditation process. A steering committee, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the Accreditation process. The steering committee organized an appropriate committee or committees to determine the quality of all programs, activities, and facilities available for young people by completing the school self-reflection.

Public schools evaluated by the Commission on Public Schools must complete appropriate materials to assess their alignment with the Standards for Accreditation and the quality of their educational offerings in light of the school's core values, beliefs, vision of the graduate, and unique student population. The school used questionnaires developed by the Commission on Public Schools to reflect the concepts contained in the Standards for Accreditation. These materials provided discussion items for a comprehensive assessment of the school by the professional staff during the self-reflection.

In addition, the professional staff was required to read and vote on Part 2 of the self-reflection to ensure that all voices were heard related to the alignment of the school to the Standards for Accreditation. All professional staff members were expected to participate in the self-reflection process either by participating on a committee or by participating in discussion and evidence gathering to support the school's alignment to the Standards.

The Process Used by the Visiting Team

A visiting team of five members was assigned by the Commission on Public Schools to conduct a Collaborative Conference visit to Northwestern Regional High School in Winsted, Connecticut. The visiting team members spent two days conducting a visit; reviewed the self-reflection documents, which had been prepared for their examination; met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students and parents; and

observed classes to determine the degree to which the school aligns with the Commission on Public Schools' Standards for Accreditation. The team also reviewed the proposed priority areas for the school's growth plan to be developed as part of the Accreditation process.

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 within each section of the report. The report includes 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.

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 the school.

Foundational Element Ratings

Foundational Element Ratings

Foundational Elements	School's Rating	Visitors' Rating
1.1a - Learning Culture	Meets	Meets
1.2a - Learning Culture	Meets	Meets
2.2a - Student Learning	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet
3.1a - Professional Practices	Meets	Meets
4.1a - Learning Support	Meets	Meets
5.1a - Learning Resources	Meets	Meets

Foundational Element 1.1a - Learning Culture

Narrative

The school community provides a safe physical environment. Exterior doors to the building are locked at 7:34 am, and all visitors must enter through the main entrance at the front of the building via the sally port at the main office. From there, all visitors are required to present their driver's license and are issued a visitor photo identification badge, using the Raptor Visitor Management system. Visitors must display this identification at all times. The school also employs a full-time school resource officer to ensure the safety of the students, faculty, and staff in the building. The school conducts monthly safety drills, which include lockdown and fire drills, that are designed to prepare students and staff for various emergency situations.

In addition to physical safety, the school also supports the social and emotional well-being of its staff and students. The school offers students a diverse selection of clubs and activities that are intended to help them develop a sense of community with fellow peers and staff. Additionally, hundreds of students and staff members have participated in "Kindness in Motion" projects, which have inspired a rich culture of empathy and caring.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 1.2a - Learning Culture

Narrative

The school has a written document describing its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate. The school's core values and beliefs about learning have been developed and are posted prominently throughout the school. The vision of the graduate was completed in the spring of 2020 with broad representation from a variety of stakeholder groups in its development. The vision of the graduate includes knowledge, skills, dispositions, and understandings that the development committee determined are necessary for a student's success in high school as well as in post-secondary life.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 2.2a - Student Learning

Narrative

The school does not yet have a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments. Some common characteristics of the Understanding by Design (UbD) model, such as essential questions, enduring understandings, concepts, skills, academic vocabulary, and assessment practices (formative and summative), are included in each department's curriculum. However, explicit instructional strategies are not included and connections to the vision of a graduate are not yet incorporated. There is no formal curriculum revision and renewal cycle at the school. Curriculum maintenance occurs at the department level PLC time, PD days, and summer hours.

Rating

Does Not Meet the Standard

Foundational Element 3.1a - Professional Practices

Narrative

Administrators, department leaders, and the superintendent collaborated to develop a school improvement/growth plan in 2022. The plan includes specific measurable goals and expected learning impacts for both student academics and social-emotional learning based on a theory of action framework. Goals are focused on improving student achievement (academic and SEL), enhancing professional development and collaboration, and communicating with stakeholders. Specific and targeted action steps are identified to guide the work.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 4.1a - Learning Support

Narrative

The school has a wide range of intervention strategies designed to support students. Teachers work with department supervisors to provide tier-one interventions to students in the classroom. If these students need additional assistance, there is a process to refer them to the child study team (CST) for extra help. The CST can recommend higher-tier interventions. These additional interventions include math and writing centers. These centers are available throughout the day and are staffed by certified teachers. Additionally, there are focused reading interventions, a math skills seminar course, and an academic resource center. Social workers, school psychologists, nurses, and school counselors partner with teachers to respond to students' social and emotional needs.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 5.1a - Learning Resources

Narrative

The community and district provide school buildings and facilities that ensure students and adults a safe, secure, and healthy environment. The 42-acre campus sports a physical plant, including all classrooms, labs, and specialty areas that support the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services. Student interests are sufficiently supported through a variety of facilities including two gymnasiums, an outdoor track, sports fields, tennis courts, an auditorium with a stage, the little theater, band and choral rooms, and art, construction, and graphic art spaces. There are also science labs, a computer lab, and Chromebooks for each student, as well as writing and math help centers. Areas for health and wellness classes, such as an aerobics room and a weight room, are included as well as spaces for a variety of co-curricular programs that take place after school. The library media center and the cafeteria are sufficient spaces to meet the school's needs.

The school building and its facilities are clean and well-maintained and maintenance issues are typically addressed by one of the licensed tradesmen employed by the district. The school buildings and facilities also meet all applicable federal and state laws and they are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Standard 1 - Learning Culture

Narrative

The school community provides a safe, positive, respectful, and inclusive culture that ensures equity and honors diversity in identity and thought. The school's core values and beliefs state that the school strives to "create a safe learning environment" while at the same time preparing "individuals to respect diversity and become responsible citizens." Student survey data that was completed at the start of the 2021-2022 academic year demonstrated how much students appreciated the open lines of communication that existed between the students and the faculty at the school. Student survey data also demonstrates that students appreciate the respect that is given to them by the faculty and staff, which they attribute to the open lines of communication that exist within the building. Students at Northwestern Regional High School feel heard.

While the open lines of communication are one contributing factor to the culture that exists within the building, the school utilizes other ways to create inclusiveness and respect diversity. Each teacher at the school is encouraged to create a social contract with each classroom during the first few days of the academic year. The goal of the contract is to provide the students and faculty an opportunity to create a collaborative list of expectations and guidelines that everyone within the classroom will abide by in order to create the most positive learning environment possible. Beyond the classroom, the school offers a robust program of co-curricular opportunities that allow the student body to find community with students and faculty. For example, the Gay-Straight Alliance has been a vital resource for many LGBTQ+ members of the school community for many years. Students and faculty members regularly meet together not only to share ideas and talk with each other but also share ideas and educate the greater school community. More recently, members of the student body worked to create a variety of student-led organizations where students are encouraged to discuss a variety of social and political issues. The social justice club and common ground club both allow students and faculty to learn more about the complexities of differing opinions and beliefs held by those within the school community. The school maintains an active unified sports program that joins people with and without disabilities onto a single team to compete in soccer, basketball, and track and field.

Although the school's core values are visible in many areas of the building, including hallways, common areas, and classrooms, they do not yet drive student learning, professional practices, learning support, and the provision and allocation of learning resources. The school adopted the vision of the graduate at the end of the 2021-2022 school year. Teachers and students are in the beginning stages of understanding the vision of the graduate. Teachers work collaboratively to learn, share, and revise best professional practices in professional learning communities (PLCs). At the start of this year, the district superintendent introduced a new initiative to reimagine the work that is done in PLCs to provide research-based evidence to both affirm and direct the work that the PLCs complete from month to month.

The school faculty and staff make a concerted effort to ensure the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional well-being of each student. Administration and staff are present and visible in high-traffic areas of the building. School administrators host in-person class meetings to review new procedures, expectations, and what it means to be a Highlander. Parents are appreciative of how their children are known in the school by teachers, administration, and the superintendent. The school offers a comprehensive program of studies, including a variety of core and elective courses designed to appeal to learners of all levels. The school has implemented a capstone project that each student completes as a mastery-based graduation requirement. The school provides many co-curricular activities, including athletics, music, theater, robotics, and clubs. Students and families utilize PowerSchool to access grades, attendance, and schedule information. Each course is assigned a specific Google Classroom page where teachers, students, and guardians can remain connected to access specific course, assessment, and assignment information for each course on a student's schedule.

To ensure that the social and emotional needs of the entirety of the student body are being addressed, the school provides a variety of training to the faculty and staff. The school identifies students in need of emotional support and makes sure that the faculty and staff understand how the referral process should work for students in need of help. Every member of the faculty has completed Question. Persuade. Refer. (QPR) suicide intervention training, and over the course of the last several years, the district has been training the faculty on the Yale RULER framework. The school has also developed a two-pronged approach to the referral process through

which educators can identify and provide assistance to students in need of help. These referrals are designed to identify students in need of support either academically, socially, or emotionally.

The school is a dynamic community of professionals devoted to continuous improvement. The superintendent embarked on a new revisiting PLC initiative during the 2021-2022 school year. The purpose of this focus is to provide greater structure and time for professional learning to occur within the school day. Because the district has only recently moved toward more structured PLC time, there have not been efforts to evaluate and improve upon the process to date. Teachers collaborate both formally and informally. Planned monthly meetings include a department meeting, department chair meeting, faculty meeting, and PLC meetings. Under the superintendent's revisiting PLC initiative, teachers were provided with two additional PLC periods during the schedule rotation resulting in a greater focus on reviewing data from assessments, planning more innovative and interactive learning experiences, evaluating lessons, and addressing content or skill deficiencies observed in the student population. Departments are committed to analyzing SAT scores to drive instructional needs and services in the building which resulted in the development of both a math help center and a writing center. The analysis of student data drives student learning objectives, social-emotional learning goals, and professional growth objectives. Forty-eight percent of educators report setting concrete improvement goals for instruction or to improve practice weekly or daily. Similarly, 52 percent develop concrete plans to improve instruction daily or weekly. As the PLC program is further developed, there is a hope that educators may have common planning time with members of their PLC team for further instructional reflection.

Commitment to providing educators with what they need to be successful in the classroom is a focus of the content-diverse professional development and evaluation committee (PDEC). This twenty-one-person group includes members from the administration, classroom educators, student services, and special education. Teacher-led professional learning is the most consistent aspect of the school's professional development plan, resulting in high levels of voice and choice. Innovation and reflection have been the focal point of the last two years in education. During the transition to distance learning, the school's staff proved its commitment to embracing technology and sharing resources, resulting in a relatively seamless transition to Google Classroom and a multitude of technology-rich lessons and assessments, none of which would have been possible without the professional culture already in place. The desire to share new ideas is evident in this year's *PDEC Learning Digest*. Circulated monthly, the online journal disseminates information on new teaching strategies, technological updates, departmental updates, educational resources, book recommendations, and club updates. Such work is backed up by the administration's efforts to support off-campus professional learning as well. Advanced placement teachers are routinely sent to Taft Educational Center for training. State and national conferences are attended by departments, and social-emotional training is offered for staff and students. Due to these professional opportunities, 82 percent of the staff report a willingness to try new ideas. The administration has a history of including teachers' voices on committees such as hiring, the vision of the graduate, PDEC, school climate, and the reopening committees of 2020.

Overall, the school promotes intellectual risk taking and personal and professional growth. Teachers have a high level of autonomy in the creation and implementation of curriculum, and they encourage students to try new things or experiment. Almost 99 percent of staff were favorable to encouraging risk taking and implementing new ideas. Intellectual curiosity is paramount to student success, and the staff uses professional development and PLC time to create a wide range of lessons that meet the diverse needs of all learners. There is consensus that mistakes are part of the learning process, and 98.7 percent of teachers teach students that making mistakes is a part of the learning process. Eighty-three percent of parents feel their children are taught this directly, and 89 percent of students agree. Teachers utilize a variety of different strategies to encourage students to learn from mistakes. Departmental rewrite policies, test corrections, the capstone process, error logs in ELA, the math help center, the writing center, academic support days, and peer mentoring are all part of the learning process. Administratively, the principal and assistant principals maintain an open-door policy and are philosophically aligned with restorative practices. In order to take educational risks, it is imperative that respect and support for all educational stakeholders are evident. Teachers, students, and parents alike report that members of the Northwestern community respect the views of others even when they disagree. Almost 86 percent of students believe they are taught this directly. The creation of classroom charters, modeling respectful discourse, creating structured debates, and the focus on social-emotional learning all play a role in establishing the norms to maintain positive and open discourse as a district.

The school has an inclusive definition of leadership and provides school leaders with the authority and responsibility to improve student learning.

The leadership structure at the school is unique in that the district has both a building superintendent and a building principal. Having both leaders present daily encourages an increasingly collaborative relationship between the district and building-level decision-making. The leadership team is led by the principal and two assistant principals who work together and independently under the house system. The house structure individualizes connections with stakeholders, providing an assistant principal, school counselor, and secretary dedicated to a particular set of students and families. The system enables leaders to maintain a great deal of autonomy while focusing on collaborating with counselors to ensure that the needs of students are met. The school's leaders prioritize student learning, teacher development, and a positive relationship with the board of education and community.

Instructional leadership is evident in the principal's devotion to continuous staff development and improvement. In such a localized district, it is important that the building principal has unrivaled leadership in the fields of curriculum updates, hiring/termination, budget, and the day-to-day operations of the building. The principal oversees the SLO process for department chairs directly and works closely with the assistant principals to ensure their work with teacher evaluations is a priority. Beyond teacher evaluation, the principal is a strong proponent of professional development for all educators, encouraging attendance at state and national conferences as well as TAFT conferences for educators of AP courses. Approximately four hundred hours of professional learning time are provided to educators each summer to pursue individualized needs. Putting the education and improvement of teachers at the forefront, the school has secured an extremely high approval rating in the field of teacher autonomy. Teachers feel trusted at the school with roughly 95 percent reporting favorably regarding their ability to plan and implement their own curriculum, and 74 percent of families are in agreement. The rehaul of the technology education program speaks to the success such trust and support can have. Using a new STEM lab, students will soon have the opportunity to work on engineering electric cars in conjunction with the Electrathon Program. Progress like this is only possible through devoted leaders. In comparison to teachers, 71 percent of parents feel their voices are sought out and validated by administrators. In order to provide all stakeholders with the power to enact change, parents and students are valued members of hiring committees, reopening committees, and vision of the graduate meetings. The principal communicates home to families on a range of topics through his *News From the Hill* e-blast.

The leadership structure at the school is designed to yield positive learning outcomes for students. The relationship between the board of education and the superintendent is defined by policy and operates as intended. There is a close relationship between the board of education and building leaders to set yearly goals beneficial to the school community. The district goals are then tied to teachers' SLOs for the upcoming school year. To ensure connectivity, the superintendent's yearly administrator retreat focuses on the development of theory of action statements to link goals to classroom actions. Each year, the retreat analyzes data, establishes goals, and centers on what it takes to maintain the positive school culture. The leadership team strives to build a bridge between classroom educators and the board of education by including presentations from department leaders at board of education meetings. To broaden the voice of students, two students serve as representatives to the board and have a strong presence in decision-making at the highest level.

The school culture fosters civic engagement and social and personal responsibility. The school sets high standards for social and personal responsibility and focuses on students engaging with their communities at a local and global level. Roughly 92 percent of families and 94 percent of students feel the school teaches students to take responsibility for their own actions. These high numbers are related directly to the foundation of service instilled in students and staff. The administrative team believes strongly in the power of kindness resulting in the successful district-wide Kindness in Motion (KIM) program. KIM is a unique, award-winning program that was instituted in 2015. It was recognized by InspirEd, Facebook, and the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. Through this program, mini-grants are awarded with the butterfly effect in mind, believing that one small act of kindness can inspire countless others. In 2019, the school was awarded a \$25,000 grant from InspirEd, Facebook, and the Yale School of Emotional Intelligence to maximize the impact and reach of KIM. The grants received by students fund projects to aid cancer research, animal rescues, local soup kitchens, women's shelters, veterans, and local students in need. Hundreds of students have taken part in this valuable empathy-building program. KIM shapes school and community relationships and has certainly created the butterfly effect in the district, local, national, and even international community.

The school's clubs have committed to giving back to the community through student council blood drives, turkey baskets, and trunk or treat for children. National Honor Society commits to service projects and helps tutor and mentor students in need of support. The school's foreign language club is currently

sponsoring a student in Oaxaca, Mexico, through the Oaxaca Street Children Grassroots organization , and in 2018-2019 the school raised enough funds to drill a well in South Sudan through Water for South Sudan. While KIM builds upstanding behavior and connections to the broader community, the school also offers an abundance of clubs and activities organized to enhance social awareness and responsibility.

To aid in the development of greater social responsibility and a culture of respect, social justice club and GSA educate and support students in maintaining fair and respectful treatment of all community members. Staff training in LGBTQ+ issues furthers the school's commitment to maintaining a safe school environment. The GSA put forward a "Safe Space" campaign with posters representing the school's commitment to LGBTQ+ safety and support. Likewise, unified sports and Northwestern's LINKS programs focus on inclusion and collaboration between students of all academic, social, and physical levels in sports, school, and community activities. All of Northwestern's sports teams require community service projects ranging from campus cleanups to fundraisers for a range of needs. With all of the efforts in place, 64 percent of students feel they make contributions to their community.

Civic engagement is continuously supported through both clubs and the curriculum. Model UN club teaches diplomacy, problem-solving, collaboration, and respectful discourse by broadening students' understanding of the complex world around them. The civics curriculum includes a mandatory civics project which ensures a community service project is completed by every Northwestern graduate. The civics course requirement and current issues elective allow students to engage with current events in meaningful ways. Likewise, the agricultural education program offers service options each semester.

Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- classroom observations
- community members
- department leaders
- facility tour
- NEASC survey
- parents
- school board
- school leadership
- self-reflection
- student work
- students
- teacher interview
- teachers

Standard 2 - Student Learning

Narrative

The school is in the nascent stages of implementing its vision of a graduate it was approved by the board of education in the spring of 2022. The six elements of the vision of graduate outline the transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success that students will acquire by participating in a variety of experiences and learning opportunities prior to graduation. However, the school has not yet developed a formal process to measure individual student progress or whole-school progress toward achieving the school's vision of the graduate. Currently, the school uses holistic rubrics to inform parents of student progress toward the acquisition of 21st-century skills. Creating holistic rubrics to assess progress on the vision of a graduate in a similar fashion could be reflected as an updated reporting feature in PowerSchool. Student self-assessment and reflection on their own progress in achieving the vision could be accomplished through a variety of experiences including capstone projects, senior projects, community service, and through coursework and co-curricular activities.

There is not yet 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. Sample curriculum documents reveal that common general characteristics from the Understanding by Design (UbD) model including essential questions, enduring understandings, concepts, skills, academic vocabulary, standards alignment, and assessment practices (formative and summative) are often incorporated into curriculum documents in different departments. The three-stage UbD process is not utilized, and explicit instructional strategies, interdisciplinary connections, and specific links to assessments and resources are not included in the curriculum documents, nor are there connections to the vision of a graduate. Curriculum documents are not housed in a central location. Some curriculum exists on websites; other departments utilize Google Drive. Curriculum maps are not complete. There is no formal curriculum revision and renewal cycle. Curriculum maintenance occurs at the department level PLC time, on PD days, and during summer hours.

The existing curriculum incorporates opportunities for deeper learning and allows students to make connections across disciplines. The school is working to increase learner application of knowledge and skills and enhance understanding using interdisciplinary connections and authentic learning experiences are being employed. Many classes have prerequisites from which courses build upon prior knowledge, and skills gained from previous coursework. Summer work, teacher recommendations, department-head or instructor permissions, and application to programs are required for access to some courses. There is an override process that allows for student choice which can be initiated by the student or the parent if a student would like to take a course without the necessary prerequisites, but it must be signed by the parent to take effect. Most departments have spiraling curricula that incorporate prior knowledge both from previous courses and within the same course throughout the year. The program of studies further informs the vertical progression in the content areas by offering choices that can be tailored to each student's individual trajectory and allow for flexibility when that path has been modified.

Learners are exposed to a variety of authentic learning experiences where they are able to directly apply their skills in a relevant and meaningful way. Relevant, authentic learning experiences are reflected in several examples across disciplines. For example, students apply real-world banking and accounting knowledge and skills to the school's on-campus branch of Northwest Community Bank; they apply cooking skills to enhance their knowledge of Italian cultural studies to make, serve, and eat pasta made from scratch; and they apply math concepts and skills through a shopping experience at a local store to help students understand budgeting, money-management, and decision-making. In the graphics/construction area, students led the redesign and renovation plans of the entire space, used software to create a visualization of the redesign, and participated in constructing the space, including the installation of welding booth curtains. Learners engaged in graphics work that was based on actual contracted community work to create laser etching for maple syrup bottles. Students in a statistics class analyze and evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of various research method design choices related to conducting a biology experiment. Learners have access to a variety of project-based learning opportunities. In technology courses, students design and create model airplanes, create sets for school and local drama productions, build electric cars, learn masonry, use a lathe for making pens, as well as create 3D home designs. In a ceramics class, students focus on one sculptor who inspired them to create a ceramic series that reflects the style of the artist that they chose. A deeper understanding of specific techniques and crafts was allowed by

maintaining this level of focus and depth while also allowing choice. Students were able to explain the techniques that they were using while honing their skills as well as to explain why they made the choices that they made and why they chose their particular artist. The entire Energy and the Environment course encompasses one large-scale project that calls for students to make a functioning generator. They learn about electronics and energy generation as well as the physical construction of the generator. All technology projects incorporate learning across the curriculum including math, science, art, and English. In civics classes, students must complete a citizenship project. Each student must plan, implement, and evaluate a semester project which will respond to a problem of local, state, national, or global concern. Students must commit at least five hours to this project. Grade 11 health classes offer first aid and CPR certification. Child development classes use robotic babies to provide authentic learning experiences in caring for infants. Child development students create lesson plans for preschool students and then teach them to their classmates.

Learners can participate in a variety of informal experiences where interdisciplinary connections are made. Evidence of these connections can be seen in several areas. During an Anatomy lesson, Science students use art concepts to create an artistic rendition of tissue types in the style of impressionism. The capstone curriculum offers students the opportunity to choose their own path and in most cases includes an interdisciplinary component. Students learn to find geometric figures in their everyday lives and use art to design models using the figures they see. Technology courses make connections to science in electricity, English via script writing, and algebra via problem-solving. While many interdisciplinary connections exist, they are created informally. However, there are few formal, intentional, long-term, cross-disciplinary experiences and courses.

Most instructional practices are designed to meet the learning needs of each student. Teachers implement a variety of strategies and tools to differentiate and individualize instruction. Many student projects can be produced in different modalities based on students' skills, interests, and learning styles. Students lead their learning in computer programming where students work on individual self-paced projects of their own interest. Students lead their learning, asking questions, and helping each other. In biology, English, and mathematics teachers created purposely chosen/organized groups for lab and post-lab questions and presentations. In English and math classes, students sit strategically to allow for group learning. Flexible grouping strategies are employed based on needs and the purpose of the lesson. Teachers also incorporate multi-modal instruction by using audio, visual, and kinesthetic strategies to allow greater access to learning. Departments use reteaching technologies and retesting so that students can master skills and content. It is a common practice to have two teachers or educational assistants in general-level classrooms. A true co-teaching model is not yet in place as the schedule does not allow for co-planning. All students can access additional support via the math help center, the writing center, academic support classes, and response to intervention (RTI) as well as seeking out additional time with individual teachers. The instructional culture in the school is personal and prescriptive as teachers frequently modify instruction to tailor to individuals, and students frequently seek out their teachers for extra support during free periods and before and after school. If a student is struggling in several courses, instructional interventions and support are coordinated by the school counseling department. The school also offers opportunities to challenge students with more rigorous learning experiences. Some courses offer an honors challenge component within a heterogeneously grouped classroom during grades 9 and 10 to provide additional opportunities for extension. For example, in English, students are given opportunities for papers that are more rigorous. However, most courses operate within the school's four academic levels: general, college preparatory, honors, and AP. Another extension opportunity for students is to become a math mentor in freshman math classes and assist in enhancing the understanding of their peers by sharing their expertise through tutoring. In English, formative assessments are used prescriptively to adjust course content and to individualize instruction. The use of formative assessments to adjust instruction increased in the wake of COVID-19, as teachers had to adapt practices to reteach content and skills that had atrophied. Informal formative assessments as well as more structured common formative assessments work in tandem to provide data for learning. Departments also analyze standardized test results and summative data "of" learning to adjust instruction, and teachers use SLO goals to shape instruction based on student needs. The ability to triangulate several data points provides reinforcement for identified areas of growth and celebration. Collaboration within the classroom is encouraged and purposefully designed based on student abilities and needs. The "power of the peer" is utilized in many classes to provide additional support. Within departments, teachers frequently collaborate to share and refine instructional practices. The school has a monthly PLC time set aside to facilitate collaboration. Teachers of the same course sometimes choose to meet informally daily or weekly. Collaboration between and among departments is limited except for sporadic ninth-grade team meetings.

Students are active learners who have opportunities to lead their own learning. Sixty-one percent of students feel that their teachers allow them to make choices about their learning, and 66 percent feel they have opportunities to pursue their interests. Students choose their own topics to pursue their interests in projects, with opportunities for choice implemented across the curriculum. Most of these projects are designed to simulate real-world scenarios, and many projects - particularly in the elective and upper-grade courses - are authentic where students present and perform their work beyond the classroom. For example, in a writing class where students choose their own topics for an anecdotal piece of writing as well as a "zoom in" piece of writing. Student work was self-selected, self-paced, and allowed for teacher, peer, and self-assessment opportunities for feedback. Similarly, in an Italian class, students were given multiple opportunities to practice speaking, and students were initiating, leading, and carrying on the discussion with little to no input from the instructor. Students have a wide variety of elective courses and almost every department offers students an opportunity to perform authentic tasks or participate in competitions through courses or extracurricular activities. The mandatory capstone and civics projects ensure that all students will guide their own learning through projects that foster student agency.

Many teachers use questionnaires and student conferencing, which are designed to facilitate student self-reflection on learning. Struggling students have less agency over their learning, as they are often directed to interventions to help them pass mandatory courses. In many mandatory classes, student autonomy and agency are more limited, but students frequently have some content choices, as teachers will give students the flexibility to choose a topic within the framework of teaching a core concept or skill. For example, students write formal research papers on a topic of their choice in 9th, 10th, and 11th grade. The school promotes a culture of curiosity by offering students a wide variety of clubs and activities for students to explore their interests beyond the classroom. Many of these clubs are started by the initiative of students, such as robotics and the social justice club. The school's Kindness in Motion program has also provided a voluntary opportunity for students to pursue their passions.

Students regularly engage in inquiry-based and problem-solving activities that encourage higher order thinking. The use of the constructivist approach is widespread across departments as teachers implement instructional practices that challenge students to examine evidence and inductively form conclusions. Students in math classes use a discovery-based and collaborative approach to problem-solving. Science students conduct lab experiments and analyze data using the scientific method. World language students engage in dialogues. English students write research papers and deconstruct texts. Health and wellness students develop strategies to deal with real-world scenarios such as child rearing or applying first aid. Social studies students use the inquiry method by writing document-based questions and use the Socratic method. Vocational-agriculture and technology department students engage in a wide variety of hands-on, problem-solving activities. Business students create model businesses and participate in a variety of internship activities, including running the school bank. Art and cuisine students experience constructivist learning on a daily basis. Students in a social studies class who were required to code quotations to connect them to Maoist values and engage in collaborative conversations to defend their thinking. In animal science, students had to decide if it was better to bring back an extinct animal or wipe out an existing one and justify their reasoning in a one-page essay. In science class, learners were utilizing multiple labs to investigate how hydrogen bonds explain the properties of water: surface tension, adhesion, and freezing.

The school has a long history of teachers working collaboratively to design inquiry-based learning, which is facilitated by department heads. Faculty and students frequently collaborate, although this is mostly informal. As a result, the school has created a rigorous learning culture that is felt by students and teachers and demonstrated by standardized test scores and the success of students after graduation. However, the new eight period schedule has resulted in a significant loss of contact time for each course because two periods drop every fourth day. Teachers wrestle with the decision of what content and activities to cut from courses.

Learners demonstrate their learning through a wide variety of formative and summative assessment strategies that inform classroom instruction and curriculum. Teachers use formative assessments to give students multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate their learning. These regular and consistent checks for learning include informal formative assessments including openers, exit tickets, student discourse during group work and whole class discussion, homework, quizzes, and the online tools Quizizz, Kahoot, DeltaMath, Khan Academy, IXL, GoFormative, Quizlet, Edpuzzle, and PearDeck. Teachers are provided structured PLC time to collaborate, plan, discuss, and revise curriculum on a regular basis based on what these assessments for and of learning are telling them. There is no structured consistent method of examining formative and/or summative data in PLCs.

This time is used to collaboratively create common summative assessments such as tests, projects, essays, performance assessments, and portfolios. These common assessments serve to ensure consistent and equitable learning opportunities across grades or courses as well as to ensure consistent expectations. These assessment results, along with SAT data, are analyzed and changes are made to upcoming lessons. Data from these assessments can assist in providing opportunities for differentiated instruction including extension and intervention. Changes can also be made to the overall curriculum to communicate the alignment with the school's vision of a graduate and related unit-specific learning goals. Students are provided with objectives and/or essential questions before each assessment, and rubrics are given ahead of time for essays and projects. Providing success criteria to students prior to assessments will increase clarity in teaching and learning, and provides students with opportunities for using the success criteria for self-reflection and peer-to-peer feedback and evaluation. Students have many opportunities to present their learning to authentic audiences. An in-school bank is staffed by students, construction students build sets for the school's theater program, culinary students prepare food for school events, and soon all students will make formal presentations of their capstone projects to authentic audiences.

Learners have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning, receive corrective feedback, and use this feedback in meaningful ways to support their learning. Students are given multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate their learning. Over 75 percent of learners indicate that they have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning, receive corrective feedback, and use the feedback in meaningful ways to support their learning. Teachers provide consistent, systematic, specific, and timely corrective feedback and give students opportunities to revise and improve their work. In world languages, students receive department-coded feedback on their writing and can resubmit their corrected homework assignments. In social studies, students can rewrite essays by acting on extensive feedback given to help them improve their writing. Math has a study guide policy that allows students to review test corrections with their teacher and earn points back. Students revise written work in English using a multiple draft process; direct feedback is given using the error key and writing rubrics. Science teachers use PearDeck to provide formative assessment feedback, they employ peer editing and self-reflection with many assignments, and they allow students to retake tests to show improvement. All departments use a variety of formative assessment tools and provide students with both verbal and written feedback on that work. Students reflect on their work in varying degrees across all departments. In physical education and agricultural education classes, students receive feedback both on skills and separate feedback on effort. Students in a greenhouse and nursery production course had to problem-solve what to tell their customers due to the fact that the cemetery boxes they had ordered were going to arrive later than expected due to supply issues. They came up with a script with guided questions from their teacher. One student was observed practicing the script with her teacher after the rest of the class headed to the shop to work on other tasks. He provided her with feedback, which she noted and incorporated into her script.

More than three quarters of Northwestern families agree that teachers provide their children with useful and timely feedback on their assignments, and 71.5 percent of families agree that teachers allow their children to revise assignments to improve their grades. More than 75 percent of students feel their teacher provides opportunities for them to revise their assignments to improve their grades, and 79 percent of students feel they are given multiple opportunities to show what they know about the themes they are learning. Sixty-eight percent of students feel they regularly reflect on their own learning. Over eighty-eight percent of faculty report that they provide opportunities for students to revise their assignments to improve their grades, and 95.2 percent of faculty report that they give their students multiple opportunities to show what they know about the themes they are learning. Seventy-one percent of faculty report that students regularly reflect on their learning.

Learners use technology across all curricular areas to support, enhance, and demonstrate their learning. The school has used technology effectively in all disciplines. Nearly 77 percent of learners indicate that they use technology across all curricular areas to support, enhance, and demonstrate their learning. The district is a 1:1 Chromebook environment, and there are additional machines on hand to ensure that students always have access to technology when needed or desired. In response to the challenges of the pandemic, the entire school community has wholeheartedly embraced countless new technological tools to help students within and outside the classroom. Students personalize the pace of learning in math with IXL, Khan Academy, Quizizz, and DeltaMath. Digital math tools such as Desmos and Geogebra are also used to support and enhance student learning. Newsela is used to individualize reading levels and provide feedback. Foreign language teachers use BookWidgets that color code incorrect answers. Students in many disciplines create summative performance assessments using technology including Desmos, Google Sheets, cell phone videos, and spreadsheet programs. All departments used technology to support student collaboration as the school operated under the hybrid-

learning model for most of 2020-2021. At-home and in-person students were able to work together using Google Docs, Google Slides, Prezi presentations, Google Meet (breakout rooms), and Jamboards. Google Classroom provides access to copies of homework, study guides, daily lesson notes, tutorials, supplemental resources, and club/activity communication, which the school continues to use today. For ten years, teachers have shared their knowledge of technology in mini-workshops with peers during PD time.

Students share work with an audience beyond the school community and broaden perspectives locally and globally through technology. Geology students create videos about careers available in earth sciences. Ninth grade integrated science students use Google Slides to explain energy sources. Agricultural education students use technology to input financial entries and build resume skills. In social studies, emailing elected officials is common. Google Meet was used for guest speakers during the pandemic. The 2020 Model UN conference, 2020 Envirothon Competition, and 2021 Mock Trial competition were online. Students in 3D Home Design worked independently in a MAC Lab, using Chief Architect software to design a room. The teacher checked for understanding and provided feedback to students. Learners in a wellness course created digital content on what they learned about the dangers of vaping, which they are going to upload to a Google Site that the teacher is going to publish. Teachers and students continue to seek new ways to learn about and use technology to further enhance and support teaching and learning.

Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- classroom observations
- community members
- department leaders
- facility tour
- NEASC survey
- parents
- school board
- school leadership
- school support staff
- self-reflection
- student work
- students
- teacher interview
- teachers

Standard 3 - Professional Practices

Narrative

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. Administrators, department leaders, and the superintendent collaborated to develop a school improvement/growth plan in 2022. The plan includes specific measurable goals and expected learning impacts for both student academics and social-emotional learning based on a theory of action framework. Goals are focused on improving student achievement, enhancing professional development and collaboration, and communicating with stakeholders. Specific and targeted action steps are identified to guide the work. The plan is aligned with district priorities and the Standards for Accreditation, informs decision-making, and reflects the school's core values and beliefs, and the vision of the graduate. Stakeholders were involved at various points during the creation process. For example, administrators engaged in a school improvement planning "boot camp" over the summer to assist with the development, format, and content of the plan. However, just over 50 percent of teachers report that they were involved in developing the school improvement plan, and approximately 45 percent of teachers state they are familiar with and have a role in implementing the school improvement plan.

Educators engage in ongoing reflection, formal and informal collaboration, and professional development to improve student learning and well-being. Many educators are given two periods in a four-day cycle to meet as professional learning communities (PLCs) with those who are teaching the same courses. Departments take notes during these meetings that include improving student learning practices and curriculum development. For example, science department minutes indicate that time is spent ensuring consistency of grade weighting within course levels and beginning the process of incorporating NGSS into the written curriculum in addition to regular department logistical needs. However some department educators do not have a common planning period, and department-level PLC time is only available once a month for 45 minutes. Collaboration between educators largely occurs informally. However, over 80 percent of educators place a high value on collaborative planning time with colleagues within the same discipline/course and feel that it has helped them improve student learning, achievement, and well-being. Thus educators express a desire for a more formal and consistent collaboration framework.

Teachers reflect on their performance through the teacher evaluator system (Edreflect) and place a focus on goals that are aligned at the district, school, and department levels. For example, the science department met to establish department goals for the year. Department time is also used to provide time to work on individual educator student learning objectives and indicators of growth and development.

Educators are encouraged to participate in professional development to improve student learning and well-being. During full- and half professional development days, individual departments can choose to work on professional development learning plans (PDLPs). These educator-led professional development opportunities are aligned with district goals and are focused on student learning, per the blank PDLP form. Tracking and reviewing PDLP proposals would help to ensure consistent implementation of these opportunities across the school. The school district is also generous with allowing educators to attend outside professional development. For example, the agricultural department meets with other programs throughout the state and departments attend national conferences such as the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM). Educators are also encouraged to engage in peer observation, but there is no formal protocols for doing so, and only 30 percent of educators state that they often participate in classroom observations with other colleagues.

Educators individually examine a variety of evidence of student learning and well-being to improve instruction, assessment practices, programs, and services. In the classroom, educators use informal assessment practices to start the class and check for understanding. Other educators conclude a class with some sort of quick assessment for understanding. This allows educators to adapt their instructional practices to support student learning. Though 80 percent of educators believe that they ask students how they can improve their instruction, only 50 percent of students think that teachers ask them how they can improve instruction. Students indicate a desire to have less direct instruction and more hands-on activities to support their learning. Educators also set and track student learning objectives as part of the teacher evaluation system. Department chairs check in to see

how student learning is progressing. Some teachers use emotional tools such as the mood meter, which is one element of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence's learning protocol, to check the well-being of students. Others use informal cues from the students to check on their well-being. If a student needs support, counselors, social workers, assistant principals, and/or psychologists are contacted to help the student.

Monthly PLC meetings can be used for looking at common formal and informal assessment data to determine if students collectively understand the material or are in need of more support. However, this time is limited to 45 minutes per month. Only 38 percent of educators state that they examine student work to make instructional decisions one or more times per week as part of a formal PLC process. Programs such as the math and writing centers are available to students every period of the day and are tracking student participation to adjust services as needed. Counselors use survey data from sophomores to improve and provide guidance for when students become juniors. Counselors also monitor PowerSchool to ensure students are having success in their classes. The library uses circulation reports to improve programs. The student support services use student individual education plans (IEPs), behavioral data including attendance and office referrals, and teacher and student reports regarding specific behaviors to improve programs and support services.

Some collaborative structures and processes support the coordination and implementation of the curriculum. Curriculum documents are written using a common template with Understanding by Design (UbD) elements on Google Documents. As the curriculum is continuously evolving, not all curricula are up-to-date and need to be reviewed and updated. In addition, there is no central repository for all departments to put their UbD units. Departments follow state and national guidelines, and math and science meet with middle school teachers to improve vertical alignment. However, not all departments have opportunities to ensure vertical alignment and progressive skill development in core classes. PLC and department meetings support the implementation of the curriculum but are limited by time constraints. There are limited formal structures and processes to support the development of a coordinated curriculum or to systematically review alignment between the written, taught, and learned curriculum. Yet, educators in departments regularly meet informally to ensure horizontal curriculum alignment between similar classes. Eighty-one percent of faculty feel that the curriculum aligns well across grade levels. Thus educators are making use of formal and informal collaborative time to ensure curriculum alignment despite not having formal, updated, and centralized curriculum documents. A formal curriculum coordination and review process would improve educators' work.

Some school-wide organizational practices to meet the learning needs of each student. The school offers a variety of advanced placement (AP), Early College Experiences (ECE), college prep, general level, electives, and supported courses. The school provides a wide variety of elective courses that are open to all types of student learners, such as science electives, English electives, art, and tech ed courses. Junior and senior students' needs, which cannot be met by the traditional in-school curriculum, can be met through the opportunity to extend their learning by taking college classes through the Northwestern Community College Partnership program. Tuition and fees are waived for students that qualify for the program. The school also offers vocational agriculture to students interested in this area. An alternative education program called students in transitional education placements (STEP) is provided for students (both regular and special education students) who struggle with learning, attendance, behavior, and/or emotional issues. The school provides a program for intellectually disabled students (LINKS) and another program for higher-functioning disabled students (AIM) that focuses on vocational skills. Eighty-seven percent of parents feel classes are challenging for their child, and 80 percent of students believe that classes meet their learning needs. Teachers offer academic support after school on most Mondays and Thursdays. Additionally teachers, administrators, and staff in the school know the students individually, place extensive focus on building positive relationships and care deeply about the social and emotional learning needs of students.

The school establishes and maintains productive partnerships with families, the community, and local businesses. Eighty-eight percent of teachers agree that they place a priority on engaging parents as partners in their child's education. Over 87 percent of teachers state that they communicate with parents to let them know what goes on in the class and/or school and that they work hard to build trusting relationships. Students and parents report that they feel teachers are very supportive of student learning and build strong relationships with students. The school uses PowerSchool to share student information through its parent/student portal, giving families access to important information such as grades, attendance, and course recommendations. The school has a social media presence on Instagram and Facebook, and the principal puts out a weekly newsletter. The superintendent also provides newsletters to help keep the parents informed. The counseling department has college representatives throughout the fall, junior and senior parent nights, and a financial aid night where

experts in the field discuss strategies to pay for college. Outreach to the community is also fostered through a variety of school events to which the community is always invited (e.g., drama productions, athletic contests, and concerts).

The school has a partnership program with the University of Connecticut, the State University of New York, and Keene State for courses in world languages, science, and vo-ag programs. The agricultural program provides guest instructors and work site placements for students in the high school program. Many students keep these jobs during the school year and into the summer. Other departments, such as the music department, bring in groups from Yale for educational performances for the school's band and choir. The business department works with the New Hartford Business Council to create internships for students. The business department has also formed a partnership with Northwest Community Bank to provide a banking program with a bank located in the school. The work projects of the graphics classes are authentic and based on contracted community work (e.g., laser etching maple syrup bottles for a local business). The robotics team has a relationship with the local factory building, Whiting Mills. Students on the team are ambassadors showing the public around the building. The school's civics classes, agricultural ed program, and the National Honor Society help promote volunteer opportunities for students to support the local community. Other community experiences include the capstone project and working with Connecticut Junior Republic on mental health programming. However, the school no longer has a work-study program for students that do not attend the vo-ag or STEP programs.

Although there is extensive evidence of community engagement and relationship building, it is more challenging to engage families in supporting student academic learning. Only 53 percent of families feel that the school places a high priority on engaging them as partners in helping their children learn, and only 36 percent of students feel that teachers work with parents to support their learning.

Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- classroom observations
- department leaders
- facility tour
- NEASC survey
- parents
- school leadership
- school support staff
- self-reflection
- student work
- students
- teachers

Standard 4 - Learning Support

Narrative

Northwestern provides a range of coordinated, individualized intervention strategies to support students' academic, social, and emotional success. In surveys, 92 percent of faculty are confident that there are strategies in place to support the needs of students, and many students utilize these services. When needed, 70 percent of students report using academic support, and 51 percent report using social and emotional support. Often, the support offered to students is informal: meetings with teachers before or after school, checking in with a trusted adult during a commons study hall, or having an impromptu meeting with a guidance counselor or social worker. Students may also choose to attend the math or writing center. These centers are available throughout the day and are staffed by certified teachers. There is an established process to identify and refer students who need additional assistance to a multi-tiered response to intervention program. While a myriad of tier-one supports are provided by classroom teachers, many staff members mentioned that there are opportunities to increase tier-one interventions in classrooms. If a student needs additional support, a student can be referred to the child study team (CST) after consultation with a department supervisor. The CST is composed of a number of professionals, including administrators, counselors, and mental health team representatives, that meet periodically to review referrals and plan intervention strategies. Currently, the school is working towards updating and streamlining the referral process. Once a referral is made, the CST facilitates the implementation of academic, social, and emotional support outside of the classroom. These additional interventions include the math and writing centers, focused reading interventions, a math skills seminar course, and an academic resource center. Referrals to school counselors, social workers, and school psychologists, address students' social and emotional needs. In some cases, referral for special education evaluation or 504 is necessary. Students who are identified as special education or have a 504 plan receive additional services. Shared Services, a cooperative education service center, provides a range of specialized programming for students. Alternative environments are also available, such as the STEP program that meets after school.

Northwestern has adequate, certified/licensed personnel and support staff to deliver effective services to students. Counseling services meet the personal, social, emotional, academic, career, and college counseling needs of students. The mental health support team is composed of two school psychologists and two school social workers. The mental health support team members have assigned caseloads and run groups. The counseling department consists of a director of school counseling, two full-time school counselors, and a ninth-grade school counselor. The ninth-grade counselor also works extensively with the middle school to ease students' transition to high school. Counselors initiate individual meetings with students to discuss academic and post-secondary plans and to provide support with social-emotional issues. Students can also reach out to their counselors who are available every day for appointments or for impromptu visits. Their central location makes these visits easy. The school counseling department has a written program that covers a range of developmentally appropriate topics such as healthy relationships, goal setting, career research, and using Naviance to explore post-secondary options. Some elements of this curriculum - such as lessons provided in the classroom - were paused during the pandemic and have not yet restarted. Counselors reach out to families in a number of ways. Evening presentations welcome families to the school and cover topics such as the college application process and financial aid applications. Counselors also work closely with outside service providers, including Greenwoods Counseling and Referral Services and the Department of Children and Families.

Students receive health services that ensure their physical and emotional well-being from adequate, certified/licensed personnel. Two full-time nurses meet the needs of approximately 615 students. They provide a variety of preventative health services and direct interventions. Preventative measures include vision, auditory, and scoliosis screenings. The school nurses work closely with the counseling staff to identify and respond to students' emotional needs. They collaborate with the athletic trainer and consult as needed with the school physician. They also build relationships with families and put them in touch with community medical professionals. The nursing staff also provides annual district training in EpiPen administration and blood-borne pathogens and ensures that medical records are maintained, updated, and secure.

While students receive library/information services that support their learning from adequate, certified/licensed personnel, these services are inconsistent. Library media services at the school are provided to students through the media center, which is staffed by a part-time licensed media specialist and substitute teachers. The library

media specialist selects digital, audio, visual, and print materials for inclusion in the school library and assists in locating resources for classes through databases and interlibrary loans. When possible, the library/media staff takes an active role in the implementation of the school's curriculum by collaborating with teachers such as a grade 10 English project and a grade 11 social studies project. The library media center is open every day during the school day, for short periods of time after school, and some mornings. There are spaces for studying and academic work with computers and printers. Many students like using the space for quiet study. Before the pandemic, the library media staff facilitated maker spaces where students could work on puzzles, legos, origami, or sewing. These spaces are no longer being maintained. Increased programming would encourage collaboration among students, opportunities for inquiry, and authentic learning.

Students with special needs, 504 plans, and English Language Learners receive appropriate programs and services that support their learning from adequate, certified/licensed personnel. Students that qualify for special education services are supported by professional staff, including a special education director, seven special education teachers, 15 paraprofessionals, a speech and language therapist, two school psychologists, two school social workers, and access to an occupational therapist. The longstanding partnership with Shared Services allows for the flexible delivery of services. There is a wide range of options to support learning. Students may be assigned to a writing or language class taught by a special education teacher or to an academic support period. Many regular education classes at Northwestern have adult support; in these classes identified students are supported by special education teachers or instructional assistants. While they do not share common planning time, special education teachers with subject-specific content knowledge (e.g., math, ELA, science) attend PLC meetings with the content teachers they are supporting. Vocational skills courses are provided for students through the school's Achieving Independence Mechanism (AIM) program. The Learning Independence, New Knowledge, and Skills (LINKS) program serves students with a variety of exceptionalities. This program provides a continuum of services, from self-contained English and math classes to vocational skills, to push-in and pull-out support, with the goal of allowing students to learn in an inclusive environment with their age-appropriate peers as much as possible. The LINKS director works with seven educational assistants and coordinates with related service providers (board-certified behavior analyst, occupational therapist, speech and language, physical therapist, etc.) Students with 504 plans are monitored by their school counselor and supported by accommodations within the regular classroom and any other assistance as required by their plans. All students on IEPs or 504 plans are monitored during the year for progress through periodic meetings with support teams. While there are not many English Language Learners at Northwestern, ELL students meet with ELL tutors. Tutors and counselors work with core subject teachers to support students.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- department leaders
- NEASC survey
- parents
- school leadership
- school support staff
- self-reflection
- students
- teachers

Standard 5 - Learning Resources

Narrative

The community and district provide school buildings and facilities that support the delivery of high-quality curriculum, programs, and services. There are adequate spaces for science labs, health and wellness, art, ceramics, technology/engineering, culinary, and music classes. The school has a branch of Northwestern Community Bank on campus. The school also has a spacious cafeteria, two gymnasiums, a small weight room, and an agricultural building with a greenhouse, barn, and various shops and labs. The building is cleaned and maintained by 10 custodians, who are assigned a particular part of the school building, with consistent and regular cleaning schedules. Eighty-one percent of students, 97 percent of parents, and 92 percent of staff feel the building and facilities are well maintained and clean the majority of the time. The buildings and facilities have appropriate mechanical systems that, although old, generally work properly and are up to date. Mechanical systems include heating, air conditioning, lighting, and an elevator. The buildings and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. Parking is sufficient for staff and students during and after the school day.

According to the NEASC survey, 82 percent of students and 94 percent of staff confirm that the building and facilities support student learning the majority of the time. The school is adequately sized to house approximately 651 students during the day as well as those in the after-school STEP program. There are enough classrooms for instruction, including the delivery of support services for special education, and most regular education classrooms are large enough to comfortably hold up to 25 students with enough furniture for all students. All classrooms are equipped with whiteboards and a Smartboard or its equivalent. There are computer labs in some of the science, computer science, and agricultural education classes. Each student has been issued their own Chromebook. There is also a larger computer lab in the media center. The school media center is a sufficient area and is staffed with a part-time media specialist two and a half days a week and a substitute teacher. The school also has an auditorium with a capacity of 435, which is used during lunch periods for study hall. The little theater has a capacity of 130 and is used as a smaller lecture hall that contains a projector and screen.

In addition to classrooms, there are offices that house the school's learning and support programs. In house one and house two, all of the assistant principals, school counselors, and necessary support staff have ample size offices to conduct confidential work. House two has a separate space and office for the math help center and STEP. There is also a health office available to students and staff during school hours. This space was recently redesigned to help improve the delivery of services. Amenities include private exam areas, medication cabinets with locks and refrigeration, a handicap-accessible bathroom, and privacy screens. Health files on all students meet state guidelines. Additionally, there are conference rooms for the principal, special education, guidance, and the business office. Because most classrooms are in use throughout the day, it is sometimes difficult for teachers to find a place to conduct group planning.

The outside facilities include a track, tennis courts, and four athletic fields. The field space is adequate for most sports except for baseball, which only has one field that is used by three teams (varsity, junior varsity, and middle school). However, the drains on the athletic fields are failing, and an expert has been hired to assess this issue and make a recommendation on how to address it.

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. The superintendent reported that the budget is presented to all of the four towns that vote on it and has passed at the referendum on the first try for the past 16 years. Because of this, the district has been able to approve requests for additional staffing and other services to meet the needs of the school. The district has also been able to use ESSER funds for the last few years for the improvement of school programs and services, and it has also provided funds for curriculum work done by teachers during the summer.

Funding has also been available for professional development (PD) for staff. Seventy-four percent of staff indicate that it is mostly true that there is sufficient time and funding for PD; however, while the school has budgeted for PD opportunities for staff, both inside and outside the school, there are only a few days scheduled for it before the start of the school year and two half-days in November and May. Professional learning

communities (PLCs) only meet once a month, and occasionally during the scheduled PD days. Also, while PLCs are generally comprised of teachers from the same department, scheduling challenges often impede this practice. Several teachers and department heads reported that teachers often carve time out of their own schedules to work with other teachers or their department heads informally on curriculum or to discuss struggling students. According to the NEASC survey, eight percent of staff say they collaborate daily with other teachers, 63 percent say they collaborate with colleagues weekly, 25 percent say they collaborate monthly, and 4 percent say they collaborate with colleagues a few times a year.

In addition to the funds dedicated to PD, the school receives Perkins Grant monies, which help to support its career and technical education (CTE) programs. The grant also can be used for PD for CTE teachers as well as equipment to support new or expanded classes and programs. Each year the administration examines the department budgets in the spring to locate any areas where the school can improve instruction and services to students.

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. The board of education has been very supportive of the school's budget. This support has allowed the school to offer a wide range of courses from special education to AP and a variety of electives. School programs that are funded by the board of education include all athletic programs, co-curricular clubs, jazz band, theater and drama, chorus, robotics courses, and other learning opportunities that meet the current needs of the students. Well over 70 percent of students, parents, and staff report that overall it is mostly true that there is adequate funding for co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities, and 77 percent of students and 85 percent of parents feel that it is largely true that there is money for athletic activities.

The budget includes funding for equipment for maintenance, custodial, food service, vo-ag, and other internal programs. Technology equipment and the resources to support library services and information technology are sufficiently funded. There are interactive projectors in every classroom, 1:1 Chromebooks, a multitude of software applications that support different courses, computer labs, tablet devices for special applications, and laptops for lab instruction. Additional funds are available to meet the dynamic requirements which often result in the acquisition of new software applications and hardware. Technology equipment is updated as needed. For example, the traditional Smartboard and Epson projectors in the classrooms will be replaced by new interactive panels, which promise enhanced useability and function and longer life. The school maintains a number of online academic subscriptions to support academic learning, including both resource and instructional materials as well as data management. Ninety-two percent of the staff report that it is mostly true that there is enough dependable funding for materials and supplies.

The library media center program has its own budget, which is developed by the media center specialist based on the goals of the department. There is a library media support position that has not been filled. Information technology is supported at the district level by one dedicated staff member who oversees the network in its entirety, including both hardware and software. The technology budget funds internal infrastructure, staff devices, and equipment, software for student learning and data management, security protocols, and student devices. Technology repairs are all performed on-site by internal technology staff.

Although the school/district has short-term and long-term plans to address the capital and maintenance needs of its building and facilities, only 63 percent of faculty indicate that they are aware of these plans. The last five-year plan that was created is outdated, though it was reported both by the director of facilities and the principal that a new one is in the process of being written. The school ensures proper maintenance and replacement of furniture, technology, and equipment. Equipment maintenance is dictated by the items' manufacturer's maintenance schedule. During the maintenance routine, the entire unit is inspected and repairs are completed as required. Contingency funds are also budgeted for unplanned equipment/furniture failures throughout the year. Individual items are replaced on an as-needed basis. Additionally, the tech-ed department daily monitors and maintains its tools and equipment, checking to see what needs to be replaced, cleaned, and updated. There is an informal short and long-term technology plan throughout the district to provide sufficient technology for the needs of students and staff. The plan is funded by both local sources and grants. Long-term plans are developed based on projected needs. Examples of long-term plans are server replacements, computer purchasing and replacement, infrastructure support and upgrades, and software migrations and evolutions. Short-term plans are in place to incorporate new computer-controlled equipment in the technology education department such as upgraded CNC milling machines, 3D printers, and laser cutters. There are also plans to replace the school's

security cameras. The five-year capital plan for large expenditures is currently in the process of being updated and revised to ensure the maintenance of buildings and grounds and future needs for infrastructure improvements, if necessary. Funding has been allocated for a roof replacement project, one of the bonded projects currently in the planning stages.

The school has infrastructure and protocols in place to ensure effective responses in crisis situations. The safety infrastructure includes trackable key fob usage, bullet-resistant glass in some areas, a secure entry sally port with a visitor identification reader and badge system, and security cameras throughout the building and campus. There is effective coordination between the school resource officer, who is located within the school building, and first responders, internal emergency services personnel, school staff, and students. The school resource officer also meets with Winsted police, fire department, and emergency services to ensure that effective emergency protocols between the school and emergency services personnel in the community are in place. Ninety-five percent of staff agree that the school has clear policies and procedures for managing a crisis, and no staff member reported that it is mostly untrue or totally untrue that it has clear policies and procedures for crisis situations.

Another integral part of the school's crisis planning is the emergency preparedness plan, which is a comprehensive plan that includes the emergency operations plan and the emergency response plan. The emergency operations plan is developed by the school safety committee in consultation with the local police departments and safety officials. The plan outlines specific operational activities that address a multitude of situations. Drills are practiced on a regular basis and a debriefing is held afterward to evaluate the effectiveness of the exercise. The school's emergency operations safety committee meets three to four times a year. The emergency operations plan is reviewed at every meeting, strengths and weaknesses are identified, and the plan is updated accordingly. The committee involves administration from all levels, the school resource officer, the facilities director, nurses, and department heads as needed. Several times a year the committee is expanded to include local law enforcement and other public safety officials. The emergency response plan was developed with local law enforcement, fire departments, and other emergency officials. This plan is routinely practiced and updated. Every other year the plan is reviewed by the State Office of Homeland Security.

The school also conducts monthly emergency drills, like lockdowns and fire drills. Eighty percent of students say they mostly know what to do when there is a crisis, and 96 percent of faculty know what to do in a crisis situation the majority of the time. Furthermore, no staff member reported that it is mostly untrue or totally untrue that they know what to do in a crisis. As part of a comprehensive plan, the school has a crisis team and medical team, and protocols for athletic coaches. The crisis team is designed as an intervention for mental health emergencies. This team meets as needed to discuss those involved in a crisis, the impact on the individuals involved in the crisis, the plan to address the crisis, and how to proceed with the aftermath of the crisis. The crisis team also conducts re-entry meetings for at-risk students to help with their transition back to school and may also refer students to outside mental health agencies to provide them with additional support. The medical team consists of two registered nurses, who annually train and certify faculty/staff regarding emergency management of blood-borne pathogens, EPIpen use, AED use, and choking intervention. Athletic coaches are also trained and certified in AED/first aid/CPR.

Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- classroom observations
- community members
- department leaders
- facility tour
- NEASC survey
- parents
- school board
- school leadership

- school support staff
- self-reflection
- student work
- students
- teacher interview
- teachers

Priority Areas

Priority Area

The Collaborative Conference visiting team concurs with the Priority Area identified by the school.

Priority Area #1 Goal Statement: Implement the knowledge, skills, understandings, and dispositions found in the 2022 vision of the graduate (1.2, 2.1, 3.1)

School Response - Implementation of the vision of the graduate will ensure that students attain the skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions to help them be successful in high school and beyond. Implementing a system that provides feedback to learners and their families will help ensure that students are meeting the expectations of the vision of the graduate.

Visiting Team Response - The school has developed a written vision of the graduate document as of the spring of 2022. The vision of the graduate was developed with wide representation from a variety of stakeholder groups. However, the skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions found in the 2022 vision of the graduate have not yet been implemented into written curricula or classroom instructional practices. Additionally, the school has yet to determine a system that will provide students and families with feedback on their progress related to the skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions found in the vision of the graduate. Implementing a system that provides feedback to learners and their families will help to ensure that students are meeting the expectations of the vision of a graduate. Defining the skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions and developing benchmarks for students to strive toward at each grade will help in the development of a system of feedback for learners and families.

Priority Area

The Collaborative Conference visiting team concurs with the Priority Area identified by the school.

Priority Area #2 Goal Statement: Reformat and complete school-wide curricular documents following a consistent template to include instructional strategies and alignment to the 2022 vision of the graduate. (2.2a, 2.1, 2.2)

School's Response - While the school has a written curriculum, a consistent format that includes an alignment with the vision of the graduate will ensure that all students are experiencing a challenging curriculum that includes the transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions of the vision of the graduate.

Visiting Team's Response - The school's written curriculum is inconsistently formatted, not held or saved in a centralized location, and is inconsistently complete across departments. Developing a consistent template will assist the departments in reformatting the curriculum documents that exist. Teachers need time to complete the curriculum documents, and consistent, school-wide expectations for what curriculum documents should contain would enhance and accelerate the curriculum writing process. Increasing access to all curriculum documents will help the school identify common themes and ideas across courses to encourage interdisciplinary connections and reduce curricular redundancy. The school might consider having a public-facing aspect to the curriculum documents so that curriculum topics, content, and skills are readily accessible to parents and members of the community. A curriculum review and revision cycle would assist the school in ensuring that the curriculum is up-to-date since it will be reviewed on a rotating basis over the years. An individual to spearhead and organize this work of curriculum reformatting and completion would rapidly accelerate the curriculum development process at the school and also ensure that the documents are consistently completed and usable for teachers.

Priority Area

The Collaborative Conference visiting team concurs with the Priority Area identified by the school.

Priority Area #3 Goal Statement: Create formal common planning time for grade-level teams in PLCs to spend more time examining student work to make instructional decisions. (3.2, 3.3, 3.4)

School's Response - Forty-one percent of the faculty believe there is a strong need to enhance common planning time. Presently, there is one formal meeting per month for professional learning community work for all educators. Under the *Revisiting PLCs* initiative, teachers were provided with two additional PLC periods during the schedule rotation resulting in a greater focus on reviewing data from assessments, planning more innovative and interactive learning experiences, evaluating lessons, and addressing content or skill deficiencies observed in the student population. However, this period cannot be used effectively unless grade-level teams have common planning time. As the PLC program is further developed, there is a need for more educators to share a common planning time with colleagues who teach the same curriculum.

Visiting Team's Response - There is a need for increased time for teachers to meet as full departments and in course-alike teams or groups, preferably during the school day. The increased meeting time will provide opportunities for additional collaboration between and among teachers, including planning a variety of learning experiences; co-developing a variety of assessments; reviewing the student performance information from those assessments; and considering how to include additional instructional innovation in lessons. Establishing expectations and protocols will help focus and differentiate the work done during common planning time and professional learning community time. Engaging teachers in building expectations/protocols will ensure a shared purpose, buy-in, and understanding of the functions of these meetings. Well-functioning professional learning communities are an important element of the planning-teaching-assessing cycle, and teachers must be provided with additional professional learning on how to look at student work, identify trends and patterns in student performance, and adjust instruction accordingly, including providing tier one and two interventions as part of routine classroom practice.

Commendations

Commendation

The safe, caring, and inclusive environment is provided to students, staff, family, and community members

Commendation

The involvement of many stakeholders in the creation of the vision of the graduate

Commendation

The robust program of studies and wide variety of co-curricular offerings

Commendation

The district professional development and evaluation committee that is teacher-led and provides significant input into professional learning for faculty and staff

Commendation

The kindness grants that are available for staff and students to access for global and local outreach projects

Commendation

The project-based learning opportunities that are widely available across content areas and offer meaningful opportunities for students to apply their learning in relevant contexts

Commendation

The multiple and varied opportunities for learners to demonstrate their learning over time

Commendation

The variety of interventions and support mechanisms to assist students with their progress

Commendation

The use a variety of formative and summative assessments to generate data for analysis to continuously inform teaching and learning

Commendation

The ongoing reflection and informal collaboration that support student learning and well-being

The culture of care and student support that is evident in the classroom environment

The wide range of formal and informal supports for students, including resource centers staffed by certified teachers

The extensive coordination between counselors, the mental health support team, and school nurses that provides for the physical and emotional well-being of students

The appropriate, challenging, and inclusive educational experiences provided for special education students and students with 504 plans

The widespread community support for school funding

The infrastructure and safety protocols that are in place to respond effectively during a crisis

Recommendations

Recommendation

Utilize the PLC time in a more structured and intentional way to maximize time and create consistency across departments, including the review of student work, analysis of assessment information, and curriculum development

Recommendation

Increase the use of student self-assessment and peer assessment in all areas of teaching and learning

Recommendation

Create a formal process for systematically reviewing curriculum and ensuring alignment between the written, taught, and learned curriculum

Recommendation

Increase programming in the library media center to encourage collaboration among students, opportunities for inquiry, and authentic learning

Recommendation

Update the school's five-year capital plan

Recommendation

Create opportunities to engage parents as partners in student academic learning

Recommendation

Create a process to engage educators in revising and implementing the school improvement plan

Recommendation

Review and update the school counseling curriculum as needed to ensure the delivery of developmentally appropriate topics in the classroom

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

This Collaborative Conference Report reflects the findings of the school's Self-Reflection 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 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.

The Commission expects school officials to use the results of the Collaborative Conference Report as well as the school's identified Priority Areas for Growth to draft a school improvement/growth plan, and to review and implement the findings of the Self-Reflection and Collaborative Conference Report. An outline of the next steps in the Accreditation process is included in the Commission's Accreditation Handbook, which is available on the Commission's website.

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. The school will complete a Summary Report and host a Decennial Accreditation visiting team two years after the Collaborative Conference to show progress implementing the school's Priority Areas. The Decennial visiting team will identify recommended next steps as well as additional recommendations for the school to continue to align with the Standards for Accreditation and to improve outcomes for students.

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 impact(s) the change has had on the school's ability to align with 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 of Planning and Progress 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. The time and effort dedicated to the Self-Reflection and preparation for the visit ensured a successful Collaborative Conference 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: Janet Parlato - New Milford Public Schools

Assistant Chair: Ms. Tina Rivera - Academy of Information Technology and Engineering

Team Members

Ms. Kathleen Coghil - William H. Hall High School

Abbie Lareau - Regional District #19

Brad Normand - Frederick U. Conard High School