

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

**Commission on Public Schools**



**Commission on Public Schools**

## **Report of the Visiting Team for Robert E. Fitch High School**

Groton, CT

October 22, 2020 - October 23, 2020

**Ms. Michele Saulis, Chair  
Edward Keleher, Principal**

# School and Community Summary

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## School and Community Summary

Robert E. Fitch Senior High School is located in the town of Groton, CT. Midway between New York and Boston, Groton is the largest municipality between New Haven, Connecticut, and the cities surrounding Providence, Rhode Island. According to data from the state of CT, the population of the town is 40,236. Groton is the home of the US Naval Submarine Base, the Global Research and Development campus of Pfizer, Inc., and the submarine construction facilities of the Electric Boat Division of General Dynamics, Inc. Other industries include tourism, traditional fishing, and advanced medical supply manufacturing. The University of Connecticut Marine Sciences center at Avery Point, with its related enterprises, gives Groton a unique place among science and learning centers. According to the state data, the median income is just over \$64,000 per year, with 37 percent of residents holding a Bachelor's degree. The poverty rate in town, 9.1 percent, is more than 1 point lower than the state average.

Groton Public Schools is a diverse, educational community of teachers and learners; educators, students, and staff. Our neighborhood schools, themed intra-district magnet schools, and award-winning high school serve over 4,400 students from across Groton, Connecticut. The district consists of six PK-5 elementary schools, one 6-8 middle school (this reflects the consolidation from 2 middle schools at the start of the 2020-2021 school year, and one 9-12 high school. The new middle school and high school are located on the same campus. Groton students have an option of choosing a state technical high school located in Groton and several parochial schools and magnet schools in the area. Current enrollment data suggests a downward trend over the past four years. District enrollment in mid-September 2020 shows total numbers at 4088 for all schools and 1025 students for Fitch High School.

The average cost of expenditure per pupil is \$16,393.22. In the FY 2019-2020, the proposed school budget is 62 percent of the town's general budget. Other monies contributing to the school budget include federal Impact Aid (4 percent), SPED Excess Cost (1 percent), Medicaid (0 percent), as well as state funding, ECS (32 percent). The total proposed budget for FY 2019-2020 is \$77,438,090.

The four-year graduation rate for 2018 was 83.7 percent. From the Class of 2019, 56.8 percent continued their education at four-year colleges, 15.6 percent continued their education at two-year colleges, 3.6 percent enrolled in a post-secondary training program, 6 percent enlisted into the military, and 8.6 percent entered into the workforce.

Fitch High School has partnerships with several local businesses, including Charter Oak Community Credit Union, which houses a high school branch. The Career Services office also regularly connects students to local jobs and internships. Additionally, students are part of credit-bearing dual enrollment programs, most notably with Three Rivers Community College and the University of Connecticut. The full Self Reflection report offers more detailed information about the connections between school and community.

## Core Values, Beliefs, and Vision of the Graduate

### Core Values and Beliefs

Our mission at Robert E. Fitch High School is to educate our students to become outstanding global citizens equipped with 21st century learning skills. The faculty and staff collaborate with home and community to promote academic excellence, personal wellness, and social awareness. We guide our students into deeper cognitive awareness and increased levels of understanding, and we encourage our students to use their individual talents to their fullest potential. Our graduates are informed, responsible adults who respect diversity and value life-long learning.

## **The Vision of the Fitch Graduate... R I S E - Overview**

THE THINKING BEHIND THE VISION: The Sentence Frame and Why We Have It

- **THE SENTENCE FRAME:** **The Fitch graduate demonstrates continuous commitment to...**
- **WHY WE HAVE IT:** We look at our Vision of the Graduate as a growth model. We meet the students where they are, and we support them as they RISE. The expectation is that they continue to grow throughout life.

## **The Vision of the Fitch Graduate...R I S E**

### **R-Resilient Individual**

The Fitch graduate demonstrates continuous commitment to personal growth and wellness by independently accepting challenges, engaging in hard work, and developing resilience to thrive as an individual.

### **I-Innovative Learner**

The Fitch graduate demonstrates continuous commitment to intellectual growth in critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and knowledge across the disciplines.

### **S-Socially Aware Citizen**

The Fitch graduate demonstrates continuous commitment to cultural understanding and interaction by actively promoting social awareness, civic responsibility, and dedication to the local and global community.

### **E-Engaged Communicator**

The Fitch graduate demonstrates continuous commitment to effective and purposeful communication that exhibits open-mindedness, respectful collaboration, empathetic listening, and a clear, comprehensive presentation of ideas.

The Vision of the Graduate, Art Work

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1\\_ajgVglyFgrskLlrlc1Lep4SZM4lsx-P/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_ajgVglyFgrskLlrlc1Lep4SZM4lsx-P/view?usp=sharing)

# LEARNING CULTURE

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## 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

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## 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

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## 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

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## 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

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## 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

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## Introduction

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

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

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

The Accreditation program for public schools involves a five-step process: the Self-Reflection conducted by stakeholders at the school; the Collaborative Conference Visit, conducted by a team of peer educators and NEASC representatives; the school's development and implementation of a growth/improvement plan; the Decennial Accreditation Visit conducted by a team of peer educators and NEASC representatives; and the Follow-Up program carried out by the school to implement the findings of its 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. At Robert E. Fitch High School, a committee of 4 members, 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's 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. Robert E. Fitch High 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 4 members was assigned by the Commission on Public Schools to conduct a Collaborative Conference Visit to Robert E. Fitch High School in Groton, Connecticut. The visiting team members spent two days conducting a virtual 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 Committee on Public Secondary Schools' and Public Elementary and Middle 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 upon 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 Robert E. Fitch High School.

# Foundational Element Ratings

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## 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	DOES NOT MEET	DOES NOT MEET
4.1a - Learning Support	MEETS	MEETS
5.1a - Learning Resources	MEETS	MEETS

# Foundational Element 1.1a - Learning Culture

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## Narrative

Fitch High School provides a safe, positive, respectful, and inclusive culture that ensures equity by honoring diversity in both identity and thought. The school accomplishes this in myriad ways, from carefully planned security measures to clubs and organizations that support students. Staff, students, and parents feel it is a welcoming community, and they are committed to seeking ways to improve their awareness of and take action on any situations that do not align with this belief. The building and school grounds are generally safe for learners and adults; however, there are some concerns over the older parts of the building and lack of ongoing maintenance for the grounds.

## Rating

Meets the Standard

# Foundational Element 1.2a - Learning Culture

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## Narrative

Fitch High School has a written document describing its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate. The new principal is committed to fully implementing it in the future. It was recently collaboratively created during professional development time, and the faculty believes it is aligned with its mindset and conceptual understanding of student growth. Moreover, the professional staff recognizes that it has much essential work ahead to integrate and implement this vision into the school culture, develop a school improvement plan that is cohesive to the vision, and establish measures of success for meeting the goals of the vision.

## Rating

Meets the Standard

# Foundational Element 2.2a - Student Learning

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## Narrative

There is some written curriculum, but it is not in a consistent format for all courses in all departments, and some courses do not have a written curriculum that is consistently implemented. In some cases where the curriculum does exist, it includes units of study with guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, and skills, but none integrate the school's vision of the graduate. The professional staff looks to some promising practices that will contribute to an improvement in this area, including a board-approved curriculum map template and the goal for the district to become an International Baccheloriate school system.

## Rating

Does Not Meet the Standard

# Foundational Element 3.1a - Professional Practices

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## Narrative

Although there is a district improvement plan for 2017-2022, Fitch High School does not yet have a formal school growth/improvement plan of its own that aligns with the district plan. The school strives to keep its current practices consistent with the district's strategic plan. The district, along with the high school, is undertaking a K-12 community endeavor called Groton 2020, a 2012-2020 restructuring and rebuilding of the elementary and middle schools and a redefining of the identity of the high school to be an International Baccalaureate (IB) school at its core. The new principal does not yet have a plan in place to develop a school growth/improvement plan but is committed to the new vision of the graduate and plans to have all decisions guided by it.

## Rating

Does Not Meet the Standard

# Foundational Element 4.1a - Learning Support

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## Narrative

Fitch High School continuously strives to provide its students the appropriate intervention strategies to support academic, social, and emotional success. There are many intervention resources available, including a highly-skilled counseling staff; however, coordinating the many resources available has been a challenge that the professional staff acknowledges as an area of needed improvement. A formally defined process is in place for identifying and referring students; however, there are concerns among the professional staff that no universal assessments are used and that ELL students need more focused interventions because this small but growing segment of the student population is struggling to be successful in many courses.

## Rating

Meets the Standard



# Foundational Element 5.1a - Learning Resources

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## Narrative

The community and school district provide sufficient school buildings and, with some exceptions, adequate facilities that support the delivery of high-quality curriculum, programs, and services. There are appropriate spaces to support student learning and the curriculum. However, the professional staff has some concerns about the older areas of the multi-aged facility. Additionally, the athletic department is concerned about many years of poor maintenance and lack of investment in the upgrading of athletic facilities.

## Rating

Meets the Standard

# Standard 1 - Learning Culture

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## Narrative

The school employs myriad ways to provide a safe, positive, respectful, and inclusive culture that ensures equity by honoring diversity in identity and thought. From carefully planned security measures to clubs and organizations that support its students, the school is a safe and welcoming community for all students. According to the NEASC survey, 66 percent of students feel welcome at school, and 68 percent agree that the school community treats students from different backgrounds with respect. Teachers are present in the halls between classes; the school has "high-five" Fridays with the principal; and there is a consistent staff presence during lunch waves. The school has a welcoming climate for its diverse student population, and students indicate that they love this about their school. Another student said she appreciates learning in a diverse population of students. However, according to the NEASC survey, 33 percent of students indicate that they do not feel welcome at the school. Nevertheless, 79 percent of teachers agree that people treat students from different backgrounds with respect. The school offers approximately three dozen clubs and over thirty athletic teams for students that often demonstrate a culture of learning focused on its students' strengths. While all activities provide students opportunities to be included in a positive environment, some are specifically designed to foster inclusiveness and improve the school's culture. For example, the Renaissance Club's mission is to increase positive school climate and culture through respect, recognition, reward, and reinforcement. Additionally, the More Than Words Club and the Unified Sports athletes exemplify the culture of inclusiveness in the building. The school also has an active Black Student Union and the Spectrum (GSA) Club.

The school's core values and beliefs about learning drive student learning, professional practices, learning support, and the provision and allocation of learning resources. The school's recently adopted vision of the graduate acronym, RISE, signifies that all students demonstrate growth toward being a Resilient Individual, Innovative Learner, Socially Aware Citizen, and Engaged Communicator. RISE is poised to drive future decisions, and the new principal is formulating plans for how this will be done. The vision of the graduate was created with input from the school community over a deliberate and inclusive five-month process, which included empowering student artists to design its representative graphic before presenting it to the board of education in December 2019. However, students currently have minimal awareness of the vision of the graduate. Nevertheless, the administrators and teachers maintain a willingness to align the vision to instruction and curriculum documents. The school's vision of the graduate comprises the Resilient Individual: The Fitch graduate demonstrates a continuous commitment to personal growth and wellness by independently accepting challenges, engaging in hard work, and developing resilience to thrive as an individual; Innovative Learner: The Fitch graduate demonstrates continuous commitment to intellectual growth in critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and knowledge across the disciplines; Socially Aware Citizen: The Fitch graduate demonstrates continuous commitment to cultural understanding and interaction by actively promoting social awareness, civic responsibility, and dedication to the local and global community; and Engaged Communicator: The Fitch graduate demonstrates continuous commitment to effective and purposeful communication that exhibits open-mindedness, respectful collaboration, empathetic listening, and a clear, comprehensive presentation of ideas.

The school is unifying how it takes collective responsibility for every student's intellectual, physical, social, and emotional well-being, and it is implementing means to show how each student is known, valued, and connected to the school community. Students feel that the school motto, the ABCs: Achieve More, Believe More, Care More, is an iconic message that describes the school values in various settings. Students and staff can cite this motto and can typically express anecdotal positive personal experiences during their time at the school. According to the NEASC survey, 60 percent of teachers acknowledge they take responsibility for the academic well-being of all students, while 65 percent of the parents report that their children feel valued at the school. In a typical schedule, the students attend a homeroom advisory, Commitment to Learn (CTL), four days per week for thirty minutes. In the block schedule, which was adjusted during the pandemic, CTL is extended to a two-hour time slot that includes lunchtime. Students are assigned a CTL when they enter the school, and most students remain with the same CTL until they graduate. Based on a block scheduling model in which classes meet every other day, a CTL teacher has the most frequent access to a student throughout the school year. This provides

every student with a consistent adult who knows and sees him or her throughout high school. According to the NEASC survey, 78 percent of students feel that at least one teacher knows them well. School counselors work with approximately 165 students each year. The school counselors advise their assigned students from when they enter the school until they leave. Throughout the school year, counselors hold structured meetings with each student on their caseload and conduct informal check-ins periodically. The U.S. Navy, which has a base in Groton, recently assigned a military and family life counselor to the school to work with some students whose parents are in the military and other students. A certified counselor who is also a military officer, the family life counselor serves as a role model for those students who wish to learn more about the military. Further, the school uses a student support team (SST) that regularly reviews some of the school's students who need extra support. These areas include academic concerns, social-emotional and behavioral concerns, and personal concerns about students' well-being. Teachers have access to the ABC referral form to address academic, social, and behavioral referrals to the SST to refer students in need of the SST. Students build strong connections with their peers by participating in athletics and club activities. According to the NEASC survey, 78 percent of parents indicate that their children feel connected to other students in the school. The school uses Anonymous Alerts, an anonymous text message system through which students can report anything of concern to the administration. Anonymous Alerts has proven very useful in having students report peers about whom they are worried.

The professional staff is implementing a strategy to clarify its commitment to continuous improvement. It has created a culture that emphasizes a continued commitment to improvement through research, collaborative learning, innovation, and reflection. Teachers are encouraged to participate in collaborative professional development time throughout the year. In accordance with the agreement between the Groton board of education and the teachers' bargaining unit, faculty members are required to work an additional five days of professional development beyond student instructional days each year. Each month, students have a half-day to allow the professional staff to participate in an afternoon teaching-learning initiative (TLI), during which time is designated to collaborate with colleagues. One day each week, the students are released an hour early, and two hours are set aside for departments to meet in department collaborative teams (DCTs). However, this initiative has been suspended during the pandemic to accommodate the alternative schedule required, and teachers miss this time for professional collaboration. Each year, the district allocates funds to support staff members who wish to attend professional development outside of school. Members of the professional staff can attend workshops and conferences within the region and across the country to network with colleagues, learn the most current best practices, and increase their professional understanding of their roles. Staff members are given opportunities to access both in-school and out-of-school professional development. Members of the professional staff are paid per diem each summer to collaborate and write curriculum. This team approach to curriculum writing ensures that vetted ideas and multiple perspectives are considered. According to the NEASC survey, 75 percent of teachers indicate that they evaluate their lessons and adjust their teaching accordingly on at least a weekly basis, and 70 percent set concrete improvement goals for instruction on at least a monthly basis. Sixty-six percent of parents believe that their children's teachers are eager to try new ideas in the classroom. However, only 50 percent of teachers believe that most of their colleagues are open to trying new ideas, revealing that the mindset for embracing change currently has some gaps.

The school's culture promotes intellectual risk-taking and personal and professional growth. The school offers various ways for staff members to take intellectual risks and grow personally and professionally. Many teachers consistently work to create situations in the classroom that encourage students to take intellectual risks. In terms of professional growth, the professional staff has been working toward several district-initiated goals. While some of these are content-driven, e.g., science's alignment to the NGSS and social studies' adherence to mandated curriculum, others are district initiatives, such as implementing the middle years program and partnering with the National Urban Alliance. While professional development is readily accessible, there are some fatigue and lack of cohesion because many initiatives are introduced each year. In the classroom, teachers, parents, and students agree that students are encouraged to take risks in completing the coursework. According to the NEASC survey, 97 percent of teachers report encouraging students to try new things and experiment. The same percentage of teachers indicate that they work to create an environment where it is okay for students to make mistakes. Eighty-six percent of students and 84 percent of parents agree, while 74 percent of students say they are encouraged to try new things or experiment. Eighty-two percent of students indicate that they are taught to respect others' viewpoints, even when they are different than their own. New instructional strategies are implemented every day during an on-line and hybrid schedule during the pandemic. Teachers are striving to find ways to engage and

challenge each student's intellectual growth and risk-taking. Teachers believe that these new strategies will remain useful when they return to a regular schedule. Currently, many different initiatives make it challenging for teachers and students to work within the parameters of each and still have space to explore and grow. Hopefully, this will be easier as the administration works to refocus the school's goals and initiatives and school life return to normal after the pandemic.

The school has an inclusive definition of leadership and is progressing toward providing school leaders with the authority and responsibility to improve student learning. The leadership team comprises the principal, two assistant principals, and the dean of students. The administrative team also works closely with the part-time athletic director and full-time school resource officer (SRO). Each morning, the administrative team holds a meeting during the first period of the day. The goals for this daily check-in time are to update the leadership team on what each administrator is working on and create an opportunity to share decision-making. Additionally, the instructional leadership group includes content area department heads. The departments with a teacher who serves as the chairperson are applied arts, English, fine arts, health and PE, math, science, social studies, special education, and world language. This leadership group meets two times per month after school with school administrators to discuss school initiatives and share decision-making. The school maintains a list of department chair duties. Years ago, department chairs were supervisors and evaluators of their content areas. The teachers are interested in reintroducing a similar model of content area administrative supervision because they feel the classroom evaluation feedback would be more relevant to their professional growth needs. The leadership team is concerned about the number of initiatives that have been introduced but not implemented with fidelity. They desire to condense this work to increase continuity and have a more focused approach for improvement. The new principal recognizes this need and is committed to narrowing the work's focus by using the new vision of the graduate as a guide. Teachers, students, and parents feel shortcomings in some aspects of the day-to-day school operations. Nevertheless, the new principal is creating an inclusive leadership culture by exploring the school's needs for improvement that lead to meaningful and defined roles for educators, students, and their families to make an impact. According to the NEASC survey, 59 percent of teachers feel they aren't given important leadership opportunities, while 78 percent believe that they have no influence over how funds are spent. Nevertheless, 75 percent report that they have influence over the books and other instructional materials they are using, and 82 percent indicate they have influence over developing their curriculum. Fifty-three percent of teachers find that the school leaders ask them how to make the school better, 50 percent of parents agree that they, too are asked. Only 43 percent of students feel they are asked how to make the school a better place. There are some leadership opportunities during professional development when teachers and students are asked to present and participate, hiring interviews have committees that include faculty members and students, and there is student representation on the board of education.

The school culture fosters civic engagement and social and personal responsibility. The school has taken steps to address these areas. There are numerous programs and policies to encourage a culture focused on civic engagement and social and personal responsibility. The professional staff believes that more work needs to be done to ensure all students are involved and that the vision of the graduate, which includes being socially aware, guides all decisions, programs, and policies. Parents describe the school climate as a family. According to the NEASC survey, 95 percent of parents indicate that their children are taught to take responsibility for their actions, and 88 percent of students report that they take responsibility for their actions. The school has many ways for students to get involved with civic engagement and social issues. It continues to foster student engagement among its current opportunities for civic and social involvement. Many opportunities exist with a wide variety of both service clubs and social awareness clubs. Two of those clubs, the More Than Words club and Black Student Union, recently presented to the faculty at a staff meeting. The student presentations informed the professional staff that many students of color do not feel heard or accepted. Faculty and students are committed to working on this issue, recognizing that there is room for improvement. While there are abundant opportunities to stay socially and civically involved, there is a concern that not enough students are involved and that the same segment of students is involved. While the National Honor Society and the IB Diploma Program require its members to complete community service hours or projects, including the required community, activity, service (CAS) project, these are not school-wide graduation requirements. The lack of such a pervasive requirement results in only a portion of students actively pursuing documented community service opportunities. According to the NEASC survey, only 58 percent of students indicate they make contributions to the community.

## Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- classroom observations
- community members
- department leaders
- NEASC survey
- parents
- school leadership
- school support staff
- self-reflection
- students
- teachers

# Standard 2 - Student Learning

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## Narrative

The school has developed a new vision of the graduate that includes the attainment of transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success; however, a form of feedback to learners and their families on each learners' progress in achieving this vision still needs to be developed and implemented. In November of 2019, the faculty formally adopted the vision of the graduate as the acronym RISE (Resilient Individual, Innovative Learner, Socially Aware Citizen, and Engaged Communicator); this includes the attainment of transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success. It is not yet embedded into the curriculum, instruction, or assessment practices. Although students acknowledge and respect the pervasiveness of the ABC motto, Achieve more, Believe more, Care more, throughout the school culture, they are unaware of the newly adopted vision of the graduate acronym RISE. This is consistent with the NEASC survey, through which only 39% of students agree that there is a clear vision about the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in life. Students describe the vision of the graduate as a “motivational starter for incoming freshmen”. They also said their choices in the Global Citizenship final project are guided by the school's vision. Although the school is in the practice of applying school-wide rubrics and reporting on their progress regularly through PowerSchool, there is not yet a system for developing and measuring criteria for success for the new vision of the graduate. There is also no annual report on whole-school progress towards achieving the school's vision of the graduate. School leaders engage in discussions of how the RISE components manifest in the classroom.

There is some written curriculum, but it is not in a consistent format for all courses in all departments, and some courses do not have a written curriculum that is consistently implemented. In some cases where the curriculum does exist, it includes units of study with guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, and skills, but none integrates the school's vision of the graduate. The professional staff agrees that some promising practices that will contribute to an improvement in this area are the board-approved curriculum map template and the goal for the district to become an International Baccalaureate school district. The board-approved curriculum template includes course purpose, learning goals and understandings, units, standards, Bloom's Taxonomy levels, big ideas, essential questions, names of common unit assessments, and common/assured learning experiences. The English department is the only one that has a current, consistent curriculum that is uploaded to and accessible on the district website. This board-approved curriculum map does not reference the vision of the graduate. There are curriculum documents available for teachers to use, but they are in different formats, various states of completion, and often not reflecting what is currently being taught. The professional staff acknowledges a need for a system to capture the dynamic updates and revisions for curricula because the written document becomes out of date after the first year of implementation. The district's curriculum revision timeline document indicates that the last revision of high school curricula occurred between the years 2006 and 2012, and the proposed years for the next cycle of revisions are 2016-2021. Some departments that are currently scheduled to be implementing phase 1 have not yet completed their written curriculum revision. Curricular work is generally completed over the summer by a collaboration of teachers in the subject area who are paid for their time. However, the summer of 2020 was dedicated to curriculum compacting, and there is currently no schedule or plan for the continuation of the work in writing curriculum.

Learners often demonstrate a depth of understanding over a breadth of knowledge. The International Baccalaureate - Middle Years Program (IB MYP) is a campus-wide, grades 6 - 12 initiative to which the district and schools are committed, and it is supported by a large grant. This will ensure vertical alignment of course content and as a result increase the expectations for students to make connections to prior knowledge across disciplines. The skills and competencies necessary to attain the school's vision of the graduate are embedded in the curriculum. Examples of how the curriculum places an emphasis on the application of knowledge and skills through authentic experiences include a research-based assessment in a sophomore year U.S. History course that requires students to answer the thematic question of whether the government should have an extensive or limited role in the lives of citizens. The evidence of making connections to prior knowledge across disciplines includes the application of key concepts of the IB MYP within different courses. Discipline-specific, higher order thinking, and transferable skills and dispositions are demonstrated in the English department through vertical alignment and scaffolding. An emphasis on learner application of knowledge and skills is demonstrated across

the disciplines. In IB Music, students pose questions on the topic of creativity and engage in discourse to answer the questions. In IB Theater, the teacher deftly facilitates rich, student-driven discourse through verbal and written comments, some of which are anonymous, that encourage students to take a position, share their thinking, and then listen to others and adjust their viewpoints as needed.

Instructional practices are sometimes designed to meet the learning needs of each student. While, according to the NEASC survey, 67 percent of teachers feel they know how their students learn best, only 24 percent of parents report that teachers have inquired about their children's preferred learning style. The English department uses common formative assessments (CFAs) to adjust instruction and purposefully organizes group learning. A department collaboration schedule indicates that time is allocated to all departments to engage in the process of developing, administering, and analyzing CFAs. While this practice has been adhered to in the past, in this current environment of online learning during the pandemic, it is on hold. Alternative strategies, strategic differentiation, individualization, and personalized instruction based on student learning needs are practices that are sometimes used. In several math classes, mini whiteboards are used to formatively assess students. Some teachers use the feedback to immediately adjust the instructional approach, while others verbally acknowledge that students are having difficulty, provide the answer, and move on without checking for understanding again. In one science class, four students sit silently in a breakout room for over ten minutes. The teacher checks on them but leaves the room without any interaction. In another science class, students are undecided on an answer and there is no follow-through by the teacher. In a music class, a teacher provides skilled practice to ensure students are actively engaged in instruction; students have learned to focus their camera on their fingers so that the teacher can provide personalized feedback on finger positioning. The teacher shares a screen to present information in multiple modalities. Tiered interventions and differentiation strategies within the classroom are employed infrequently. Teachers are concerned over how to provide additional support or alternative strategies within rigorous IB content courses. However, outside of the IB classrooms, there are supports and systems in place to support struggling learners. For example, checklists are used in math intervention classes to guide students in their work. Teachers throughout the school use a common format on Schoology, including color-coding and organization, for consistency and ease of student use. The MYP program, currently in place for grades 6-10, prepares students for instructional strategies that are prevalent throughout IB courses including those for college credit. Students in the IB college credit courses find that there are very few students of color in those classes, and they worry that some students do not make good choices in course selection and that impacts the diversity of the roster. The district prioritizes readying students for increased rigor at all levels, starting with Pre-K, and the hope is that IB courses will be more accessible for all students. The ALEKS and APEX tutorial programs are seen as intervention (SRBI) supports.

Students are active learners who are provided opportunities to lead their own learning. According to the NEASC survey, 61 percent of students report that teachers allow them to make choices about their learning. All grade 10 students enroll in a course called Personal Project through which they are given an opportunity to further their creative expression by selecting an authentic project to complete based on personal interest. The research process includes personal goal-setting, deciding upon desired outcomes, and engaging in reflection. The IB program provides a rubric to guide student work. International Baccalaureate students consistently self-reflect, using metacognition to complete their internal assessments. Nursing students are given authentic opportunities for learning during their practicum in a local nursing home amongst other locations. Concert Band and Jazz Ensemble courses allow students to plan, rehearse, and reflect on student-led sectionals. Concert Band students research, select, and justify repertoire that will be agreed upon as a class and performed in a concert. Student choice is also afforded in a civics class in which students are encouraged as a "check-in assignment" to research and report on a Supreme Court case of their choice. The teacher then flexibly selects the three most prominently reported cases to discuss and illustrates relevance through time, citing cases from 1803 to the year 2000. The students' comments throughout the class discourse indicate reflection on learning. In a world language class from a previous year, students immersed themselves in an authentic language experience through a pen-pal program with a class in another country. The students have retained the relationships with their pen pals and continue to advance their understanding of the language in a rich context, illustrating personalized, relevant, and authentic application of knowledge and skills as well as opportunities for learning in and out of school.

Learners regularly engage in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills across many disciplines. The honors Project Lead the Way (PLTW) Puzzle cube project requires students to design a three-dimensional puzzle cube made up of 27 pieces of wood; the pieces are formed into 5 puzzle pieces that form into a cube when assembled correctly. The project has the student implement all stages of the manufacturing process from brainstorming through the creation of a physical product, illustrating cognitive challenges while requiring learners

to develop and exercise a full range of thinking skills and learning dispositions. For the world history midterm project, students are engaged in deep understanding, analysis, synthesis, creativity, making connections, and understanding relationships as they compare a revolution of their choice to the French Revolution across time, place, and space using the same inquiry questions that are posed throughout the unit. In concert band, students create their own compositions using the online platform, Flat.io. Students create a melody to accompany a pre-existing harmonic progression. They plan, revise, and evaluate their composition based on student and peer feedback. Critical thinking skills are needed for students to be able to plan, develop, and compose a melody that adheres to theoretical parameters in music, providing opportunities for students to express themselves through an artistic medium. The grade 10 MYP Global Citizenship project promotes independence, flexible thinking, and persistence as students document their twenty-five hours of progress and learning in a journal. The personalized projects, one of which is “how to make homemade pasta,” are shared using media of each student's choice in a class gallery walk.

Learners demonstrate their learning through a variety of assessment strategies that inform classroom instruction and curriculum. Assessment strategies include entrance and exit slips, small group activities, analysis of the writing process, research projects, and oral presentations. The school has common assessments that serve to ensure consistent and equitable learning opportunities across grades or courses. Specific and measurable criteria for success are provided to learners prior to assessments. Rubrics that measure school-wide expectations are used once per semester by each teacher. The results are entered into the Powerschool grade book. Monthly common formative assessments (CFAs) are administered, and common MYP rubrics in grades 9 and 10 are used for summative assessments. According to the NEASC survey, 67 percent of students feel that they are given multiple opportunities to show that they understand the themes that they are learning. Formative assessment is used in quick snapshots of a lesson to inform instruction. In a world language class, students regularly communicate understanding through a thumbs up or down approach that seamlessly provides immediate feedback to the efficacy of the lesson. Common Formative Assessments (CFAs) are designed and implemented within courses; for example, an English teacher requires students to create a blog post that demonstrates mastery of skills. In UConn Early College Experience (ECE) English, students compose various multimodal writing pieces along with more traditional academic writing assignments as they engage in seminar-based writing instruction. Oral communications students practice public speaking in low-risk environments and progress to more high stakes performance tasks in front of guest judges and peers. They also apply their work in breakout rooms to a whole-class, “Fact versus Inferences” activity in which they work as a class to qualify examples on a shared chart. The teacher is quickly and easily able to assess student understanding. In an English class, the teacher checks for understanding in ways that engage every learner's thinking about the concept, skill, or information in a project called “Everything but the Paper,” students are prompted to present or teach brand new information through any medium except a paper. Learners have opportunities to present their learning to authentic audiences, including peers, families, community members, and professionals; examples of this include the yearly spring art department exhibit, music department concerts, school publications, e.g., Amphora Literary Magazine, Falcon Newspaper, and Tantara Yearbook, and the annual Celebrate the Arts community event.

Learners have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning, often receive corrective feedback, and use this feedback in meaningful ways to support their learning. Students receive ample support from teachers to both receive feedback and take subsequent action on it. Many teachers allow retakes on tests and quizzes, e.g., allowing students to retake two quizzes per quarter after test corrections have been completed on the original assessment. In one class, a teacher allows test corrections with the ability to then earn back at most one-third of the points. In another class, students are able to work on test corrections after writing a few sentences reflecting and explaining what they did wrong their first time through the assignment. Feedback on assessments is often systematic, specific, timely, and corrective. Within recent years, all departments created a consistent grading policy for honors and college-level courses. Policies include common, schoolwide components as well as discretionary or common practices across content areas. Students are provided with opportunities and time necessary to revise and improve their work. The English department policy encourages students to process writing through multiple drafts to measure improvement, while the social studies department allows test corrections for fractions of a point based on teacher discretion. Teachers use department collaboration time (DCT) monthly in order to create assessments and gather data to consistently steer instruction. These assessments are roughly based on the same set of skills each month, allowing students to demonstrate progress over time and make improvements based on the previous month's performance. Teacher feedback as well as peer feedback and self-reflection are used to guide the next steps in learning. In the English department, instruction of the writing process is ongoing with many drafts that receive both teacher and peer feedback before



the final product; this practice of drafting is in place in several other humanities courses as well. World language constructive peer feedback is used by multiple courses for IB students' internal assessment essays. The art department promotes self-reflection through its studio art analysis, prompting students to self-critique based on a teacher-created rubric. In a health class, a teacher inputs students' powerpoints into the application Nearpod. As the teacher scrolls through the presentation slides, the students unmute and narrate each of their slides. At the end of the presentation, the teacher adds an interactive Nearpod slide entitled, Positive Feedback for Your Classmate, posing the question: "Do you have a question or positive feedback for (student name)? What did you learn about him/her that you didn't know before?" This fosters positive and reflective immediate feedback for the student narrator and author. Next, the teacher facilitates a discussion focused on student posts on the interactive board to continue the conversation. After the student presenters answer all of their peers' questions, the teacher shares a 3-question formative Nearpod quiz slide to assess comprehension of the class. On the shared screen, the teacher presents a pie chart anonymously, showing the number of correct answers in real-time. Teachers provide separate grading, reporting, and feedback for work habits and academic skills. Learners in the IB MYP program are assessed based on work ethic and academic skills using the "approaches to learning," i.e., Communication, Social, Self Management, Research, and Thinking. These skills include "delegate and share responsibility for decision-making" and "negotiate ideas and knowledge with peers and teachers." The grades for these skills are embedding in the total grade for the course; however, their weight is less than that for students' demonstration of their content knowledge. According to the NEASC survey, 62 percent of students agree that they receive feedback on their progress in order to be successful in life.

Learners use technology across all curricular areas to support, enhance, and demonstrate their learning. This practice has increased dramatically with the on-line and hybrid instructional modes used during the pandemic. According to the NEASC survey, 69 percent of students confirm that technology is used in the classroom; however, this was before the pandemic, and it is believed that this response percentage would be higher during and after the online and hybrid learning experiences. The Chromebook 1:1 program was implemented in the Fall of 2015, and all students who choose to participate have a Chromebook provided by the school. The use of the learning management system, Schoology, enables students to communicate clearly and creatively on discussion boards. Schoology is accessible to parents through parent access codes which allows them to see all resources and assignments posted for their children's classes. Additionally, PowerSchool is used for its live grade book which allows teachers to provide grades, feedback, and flags, e.g., late, missing, absent, etc., electronically. Students and parents can access this platform. Students use technology in informed, effective, and ethical ways to communicate clearly and creatively. They access, support, document, and supplement their learning through technology. Students regularly use Google Docs and Schoology to collaborate digitally to support learning. Additional resources, including Quizlet, Vocabulary.com, Kahoot, and other such websites are used regularly. Throughout many classrooms, technology is used thoughtfully to engage students, including the use of Nearpod, Adobe Draw, collaborative Google Docs, Schoology, Seesaw, video presentations, and Zoom, along with its embedded chat feature. Teachers are adept at managing several technological resources simultaneously. Students construct knowledge, create, and problem-solve using technology. The Desmos online suite of math software tools affords students opportunities to build an understanding of math concepts while teachers monitor progress. Students use technology to broaden their perspectives locally and globally; many teachers include thoughtful assignments and bell-ringer activities involving online research and sharing of information. The APEX online course platform is an example of how technology is used to personalize learning. Last year, 534 students had accessed 1,688 tutorials, and 182 students had taken 348 online courses using APEX. Teachers are able to further support learning outside the constraints of the school building using Schoology to support students who may be homebound or outside of school for disciplinary reasons.

## Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- classroom observations
- department leaders
- NEASC survey
- parents
- school leadership

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

# Standard 3 - Professional Practices

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## Narrative

The district has a 2017-2022 district improvement plan (DIP) that clearly delineates goals, rationales, actions, and outcomes for five years. This plan outlines the district's priorities to provide dynamic and rigorous instruction, ensure effective and engaging instruction, and foster an excellent learning environment. The high school does not yet have a formal school improvement plan (SIP) that aligns with the district plan. Many of the school's current practices are consistent with the district's strategic plan even though a growth plan does not currently exist in writing. The existence of this five-year plan reflects a goal of backward design; however, because the high school does not have a formal school improvement plan in place, the implementation of the backward design that aligns with the district plan is not yet taking place. The district-level plan does not specifically state the manner in which initiatives will be evaluated, and it does not state what opportunities are in place for reflection and input from the various stakeholders. The reason for the high school's SIP not existing yet is in part connected to the journey of the K-12 community in what is known as "Groton 2020," a term that represents a 2012-2020 journey of restructuring and rebuilding the elementary and middle schools and redefining the identity of the high school to be an International Baccalaureate (IB) school at its core. Growth and progress in this endeavor are reflected in a dramatic growth in the number of students participating in the IB Program, from 6 students in 2014 to 75 students in 2020, with approximately 327 students taking part in the Middle Years Program grades 6-10 (MYP) that then leads to the IB Pathway. The central office team and the district are working to fully align the school's trajectory with the MYP and IB frameworks in an equitable and career-pathway-focused way. With all the structural change district-wide, the high school has not yet had the opportunity to write a SIP that aligns with the DIP. It is also important to note that Fitch High School has a new principal as of 2020. Although the new principal does not have a plan in place to develop a SIP, he is committed to the new vision of the graduate and plans to have all decisions guided by it. Decisions concerning the vision of the graduate have been informed by the perspectives of the school community and current research. This is reflected in the school's movement to integrate the International Baccalaureate's portrait of the graduate with the universal understanding of the goals and components of the vision of the graduate. While there are specific and measurable goals with expected learning impacts connected to achieving MYP and IB alignment, these goals are not yet connected to an improvement/growth plan developed by the school. Because a formal SIP does not exist in writing, the level to which the school's plan is aligned with district priorities is yet to be determined. Because this plan is not in place, it is also not possible to assess how this plan is informing decision-making school-wide.

Many staff members often engage in ongoing reflection; however, the professional staff is not collectively and continuously examining its practice to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate. According to the NEASC survey, 83 percent of teachers indicate that they spend less than two times a month discussing school goals. The professional staff feels that there is an overwhelming number of initiatives that often change from year to year, which contributes to the staff's lack of clarity and understanding of what the school's goals are. The school plans five teaching and learning initiative (TLI) days throughout the year to provide opportunities for analysis and reflection on current practices in support of student success. However, the faculty is not in common agreement that these TLI days are fostering effective analysis of teaching and learning. These TLI agendas include dedicated time to engage in data team common unit planning, MYP common unit planning time, and professional learning community meetings. Specific programs include National Urban Alliance strategies, differentiation strategies, blended learning, restorative justice practices, tuning protocols, classroom management strategies, Google Forms for assessment, Spark the Brain, and My AP Exploration. While teachers acknowledge that IB and MYP training has been beneficial and is important, there is discontent with the level to which this training has fully replaced their ability and opportunity to attend content-specific professional development. There are weekly early release afternoons dedicated to professional collaboration, and most departments have at least two common planning periods each week. While these opportunities for faculty members to engage in formal collaboration opportunities exist, faculty feedback indicates that the current format is not effectively supporting teachers' growth as educators. According to the NEASC survey, 63 percent of teachers indicate that they spend less than two times a month discussing how students learn best. Sixty-three percent report that they spend less than two times a month discussing how to improve

instruction and 75.8 percent find that PLC meetings are only somewhat or not at all effective. Members of the professional staff may request TLI time for a personal, professional development choice by emailing an administrator, explaining what they would like to work on and with whom. This option for personal choice is not known school-wide currently. The school is actively using resources outside of the school, including educational research, to maintain currency with best practices. For example, Marc Brackett was brought in from Yale University to run a district-wide training on social-emotional wellness. Training also involves course collaboration, interdisciplinary planning, and creating MYP Unit planners for content areas for future authorization within the IB MYP program. With the introduction of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program (MYP) in grades 9 and 10 have come additional training experiences. Faculty members have received initial and next level, i.e., Category 2, professional development training in their content areas, led by out-of-district training specialists who have been brought to Fitch High School to run this training. This IB diploma training involved bringing in approximately ten out-of-district trainers who ran three consecutive days of training for all teachers involved in the MYP and IB programs. A few years ago, the National Urban Alliance was also brought in from the out-of-district to provide mentorship school-wide on how to amplify students' voices. This included broadening teachers' definition of what it means to include students in the school community, as exemplified by having teachers choose students to be included in staff development days. This was done recently when students of color shared their viewpoints on learning experiences at the school. While opportunities for staff to engage in peer observation exist, staff feelings vary on how these planned opportunities are perceived to be meaningful learning experiences. These opportunities include informal teacher walkthroughs (ITWs) for which teachers can sign up to be afforded coverage so that they can observe their colleagues' classrooms and discover new teaching strategies or observe a lesson that they would like to try to implement themselves. It is the goal of the administration team that Instructional Rounds are conducted four times each year. Any teacher who would like to join Instruction Rounds is able to get substitute coverage to join administrators and department heads on the rounds. The rounds participants spend approximately 10 minutes in 8-9 classes. Afterward, the Instructional Rounds team confers, summarizing what was observed and identifying areas of strengths and future growth. These findings are summarized in a PowerPoint presentation presented to the professional staff at the next faculty meeting. Faculty members have varied viewpoints on the value of these observations, with some not considering them to contribute to their professional learning. Nevertheless, some teachers see this investment of professional growth time producing very positive results. The administrators engage in many forms of observation of teaching and learning. Their efforts toward supervision and evaluation include using effective and timely feedback to improve practices that result in increased student learning. New teachers have three formal and one informal observation. This phases into two formal and two informal observations, then, eventually, one formal observation or three informal observations. After an informal observation, the administrator leaves written feedback in the teacher's mailbox to facilitate immediate timely feedback. There is a specific document used for informal visits that have a focused evidence-gathering framework to provide feedback on what the teacher is doing, what the student is doing, student engagement, next steps, rating of student-centered versus teacher-centered, and an approximate percentage of students engaged. That teacher may or may not communicate further with respect to their informal observation by means of email or a scheduled meeting with those who observed him or her. All formal observations have a full pre-observation and post-observation meeting. Another new initiative started during the 2020 school year is an effort across the entire administration team to be more present in as many classrooms as possible on a weekly basis. Administrators are assigned to a location in the building, i.e., one administrator per floor, with the goal of completing a minimum of five informal observations per week. Then, the administrators meet to debrief on what they saw. The following week, all the administrators rotate their assigned locations and repeat their goal of accomplishing five more informal observations. This goal and subsequent debriefing allow for the observations of trends school-wide. The professional staff is striving to apply the skills and knowledge gained through professional learning to their practices. However, the faculty and school administration feel overwhelmed by a variety of initiatives, instead of being able to focus on a select few for several years, allowing them to truly have the time needed to permanently embed that new initiative into their teaching. For example, New Urban Alliance (NUA) was a strong focus for a short period of time and then slowly faded away from focus. At times, departments may be asked to incorporate NUA strategies in an activity. Outside of that, it no longer a focus. Teachers find that instructional strategies on inquiry-based learning in the IB and MYP programs need more explicit implementation instructions. The new principal plans to have all work guided by the vision of the graduate so that initiatives will be more cohesive and less overwhelming. Educators, school-wide, individually, and collaboratively examine student work, common course and common grade-level assessments, and data from a variety of formative and summative assessments. Department collaborative time (DCT) is a formal process by which teachers participate in common unit planning, participate in teacher to

teacher professional development, develop or review meaningful common formative assessments (CFAs), administer those CFAs to students, and then analyze results of the CFAs and determine an action plan to address deficiencies or plan next steps for the unit. This process is repeated every five weeks throughout the school year. According to the NEASC survey, 81 percent of teachers report that they examine student work to make instructional decisions. A significant amount of time on DCT Tuesdays is dedicated to the practice of creating, assessing, and evaluating student performance on mid-year exams. This practice is not quite as robust in terms of assessing student performance on final exams with content area teams. According to the NEASC survey, 75 percent of teachers indicate that they examine student work to make instructional decisions. Teachers find this time on Tuesdays valuable for them to work with their departments for a meaningful, focused, dedicated amount of time each week. During this DCT Tuesday time, departments meet to analyze common formative assessment data and work together to make decisions on future instruction based on the results of this collaborative work time after school. Teachers find these DCT Tuesdays more meaningful for collaboration than common blocks off during the school day. While teachers have the option to collaborate during that common free block of time during the school day, there is no formalized plan or expectation in place for how teachers use this time to collaborate in a consistent, meaningful way each week. The staff has four time structures in place to use for the examination of evidence to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. They are the five ITL days, the weekly afternoon DCT, the twice-weekly department level common planning blocks, and substitute coverage several times each year for curriculum planning. Teachers are not yet using this time for analyzing data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement. Nevertheless, teachers evaluate student performance on mid-year exams. According to the NEASC survey, 53.7 percent of teachers report that they meet less than once a month to revise and refine the curriculum, 68 percent report spending less than two times a month designing challenging lessons for their students, 69 percent report spending less than two times a month designing assessments, 63 percent report spending less than two times a month discussing how to improve instruction, and 63 percent report spending less than two times a month on how students learn best. The examination of evidence is not currently being used to ensure that grading and assessment practices are aligned with the school's beliefs about learning. The professional staff believes that when the school can formalize and present a clear vision of the school's core beliefs, teachers will be able to reflect those beliefs in their classroom-level assessment practice. Feedback is collected from a variety of sources. According to the NEASC survey, 75 percent of teachers report that they ask students for feedback to improve their teaching. Examining feedback from families is not yet a consistent practice. According to the NEASC survey, 70 percent of teachers report spending less than two times per month discussing how to partner with parents and guardians. When faculty members contact parents, the expectation is for them to log that contact in PowerSchool, but the fidelity with which this is done is unknown to the professional staff. The new ABC Referral form collects data on parent contact, but the use of this new referral form is in the initial stage of being implemented school-wide.

While programs and services exist to support student health and well-being, the examination of evidence is not yet guiding the improvement and modification of these programs. The health and physical education curriculum specifically addresses student well-being. Likewise, the school counseling department oversees a student well-being program that is implemented using the Naviance application for student wellness, a modified restorative justice program, and a Friday's with Mike wellness program in which students engage collaboratively each Friday throughout the school year. A Hot Pass is provided to a student by their school counselor as an accommodation to help alleviate social and emotional needs that may arise during the school day. For some students, the use of a Hot Pass is written into their 504 plans. The Zen Room is also available for students to take a stress break without technology. While formal time is dedicated in academic departments to examine student learning and achievement, comparable time is currently not allotted for regular education teachers to discuss students' well-being. Though confidentiality is always a concern, teachers are sometimes not informed if a student is struggling with social-emotional-mental health issues.

The school is in the initial stages of using structures and processes to ensure effective curricular coordination within and among each academic area, department, and program in the school. There are some collaborative structures in place that support coordination and implementation of the curriculum. For example, most content areas have a common prep time to give teachers opportunities to discuss the curriculum, common student learning experiences, and assessments within their subjects. Besides the content area prep time, the school uses weekly departmental collaborative time (DCT) and teacher learning initiative (TLI) time to support the coordination and implementation of the curriculum. Curriculum writing is a focus of the district improvement plan, and most of the work takes place during the summer months, with content area teachers choosing to apply for

the paid curriculum writing opportunities through the district's online application system. The district has two committees to review curriculum and instruction, called Groton Teaching and Learning Collaborative and Curriculum and Instruction Council. The professional staff finds that some additional coordination for producing the curriculum is needed. For example, although the district is involved in building an International Baccalaureate campus (Do you mean school or schools?), the school district's K-12 curriculum template is not formally aligned with the IB MYP unit planners that are currently part of the IB professional development; nevertheless, there are areas of overlap. While structures exist for the creation of curriculum, effective methods and processes to reflect, analyze, and assess the effectiveness and fidelity of implementation do not yet exist. There is a curriculum handbook that includes a curriculum revisions timeline that states it is pending funding and recommendations from stakeholders. There is a large gap in curriculum revisions between 2011 and 2018, due to attention having been placed elsewhere. In recent years, most content areas have seen frequent curriculum writing efforts to accommodate the many concurrent teaching and learning initiatives in the district; however, except for English, the high school does not have formal written curriculum documents posted and linked to the district dashboard. Vertical alignment of curriculum between grades is an identified area of need by teachers, department supervisors, the school's administrators, and the central office administrators. The school and district are working on making meaningful connections between grades 6-10, specifically in support of the Middle Years Program (MYP), and as this work continues, the vertical alignment is emerging. The district has clearly communicated its plan to use the IB program either specifically or as a guide for curriculum and instruction at all grade levels to ultimately implement its goals of providing a rigorous dynamic curriculum, ensuring effective and engaging instruction and embracing an excellent learning environment. However, the district recognizes the need to create more clear communication to families about how academic programs connect from grades K-5 to grades 6-10 to grades 11-12.

Fitch High School's organizational practices are in the process of initiating and developing consistent ways to meet the learning needs of each student. There are opportunities to access challenging academic experiences for all learners, and the creation of an International Baccalaureate campus will continue to improve the access by ensuring all students have the skills to be successful in a rigorous curriculum. A variety of International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced Placement (AP), honors, college prep, elective, and Virtual High School courses are offered. Over twenty AP courses are offered for students to experience a college-level curriculum at the high school and are designed to prepare students to take an AP exam at the conclusion of the course for awarding college credit. Over thirty IB courses are offered as a rigorous pre-university program leading to assessments in six subject areas. Early College Experience (ECE) courses are offered as an opportunity for students to take UConn courses while still in high school; currently, three ECE English courses are offered, and there are no existing plans to expand into other academic areas; nevertheless, several departments have expressed interest. Five College Career Pathway (CCP) courses, i.e., one college and one honors-level math course; one college and two honors science courses, are offered as a concurrent program administered by Three Rivers Community College. Students enjoy the variety of courses offered within each discipline. The diversity of the student body is reflected in most courses. Almost all the high-level courses are considered open enrollment; few, if any, grade prerequisites are in place. Even so, teachers and school counselors work with students every February and March on course recommendations with the idea that students choose an appropriate level of challenge and create a balanced schedule. With all the options available, many students enroll in offerings from both the AP and the IB course programs. According to the NEASC survey, 62 percent of students agree that their courses meet their learning needs, and 65 percent feel that the peers in their classes are representative of the diversity in the school. However, there are fewer students of color in the most challenging courses offered at the school. As a result of the removal of the basic level in the core academic departments, there is more heterogeneous grouping across the remaining three course levels than there has been in recent years. While open enrollment is current practice, there are growing concerns among teachers across disciplines and levels that student readiness for academic work is questionable. The elimination of all lower-level classes five years ago was not accompanied by a simultaneous creation of interventions and support for students who might struggle with new and challenging learning experiences. In 2019-2020, the school started looking at how to provide that needed support and is working on more effective ways to use universal screening to pre-identify grade 8 students who will potentially struggle and proactively plan for how to best support them. The school has hired a full-time reading specialist for the 2020-2021 school year, who is supported by two reading interventionists. This year has also seen the hiring of a math interventionist. The open enrollment of all AP classes is challenging for some staff, as it could be difficult to balance the desire for all students to experience this level of rigor, with the expectation of reaching a certain level of performance on the end of course assessments, such as an AP Test at the end of the

year. The school is striving to be more inclusive in its learning environments and practices. For example, every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, students' course schedules include the commitment to learning (CTL) period. This 30-minute block is used for students to catch up on work, meet with teachers, and work on student success plans (SSPs). Falcon Academy is an after-school program to provide peer tutoring support for students struggling in any academic area. Some classes are co-taught by special education teachers and content area teachers, co-taught by an ELL teacher and content area teachers, supported by English Language Learner (ELL) tutors as needed, and sometimes include support from paraprofessionals. The professional staff feels students would benefit from additional resources to support ELLs in elective classes. Teachers have a growing concern about effectively meeting the needs of the increasing ELL population. Currently, the available support is an ELL tutor who may or may not speak students' native languages. School-wide, there are opportunities for students to learn with and from students who are different from them, such as heterogeneously grouped courses. Myriad elective courses support core courses to strengthen and enrich the overall program and provide heterogeneously grouped learning environments. The school also has academic intervention classes in math and English for students who failed classes in grade 8 and for those who struggle in all grade levels to help reduce failure rates and increase the retention rate. Incoming freshmen who are identified as in need of extra support can take a split version of the half-year Freshman Academy Seminar, where half of the semester is spent in the seminar class, and half the semester is spent in intervention learning activities. A program called DreamBox is used for math intervention during this time, and it is expected the new reading teacher will add some reading intervention programs.

Educators develop some productive student, family, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support learning. The professional staff enables and promotes relationships with the community, businesses, and higher education institutions that support authentic student learning experiences. The popular culinary program provides food services to the community and teachers through the Falcon Café. The culinary students periodically compete in regional competitions and visit chefs for lessons in local restaurants. The school was awarded a farm-to-school grant and is in the process of designing and building a greenhouse to support environmental sustainability. The science department cultivates a long-standing partnership with UConn's Project Oceanology program with students in multiple classes engaging in their lessons at the nearby Avery Point campus throughout the school year. The children's literature classes foster literacy partnerships with different elementary school buddies in the district. Similarly, the computer programming classes visit elementary schools for coding workshops. The photography classes have a partnership with the Mystic Seaport education and resource department. The school has an award-winning literary magazine, Amphora, which provides a vehicle through which students can share their creativity with the school community. The Certified Nursing Assistant Program allows health professional students to go out into the community to practice what they have learned within the classroom. Every week, these students in the nurses' aid certification program work in a local nursing home, gaining valuable experiences in geriatric care. There are extensive opportunities for students to get involved outside of the classroom with over 60 clubs, sports, and arts and humanities organizations within the school, including the Robotics Booster Club, Veterans Committee, and Key Club. Educators engage parents in the school process by creating parent focus groups to address timely and pressing needs. For example, during the summer of 2020, a focus group of parents was created to collaborate on what 2020-2021 would look like, with a blend of digital learning and in-person learning as the core goal. In previous years, these parent focus groups have been gathered to collaborate on the topics of safety and mental health, and, on average, consist of 20 parents. The school also uses parent surveys to gather feedback, including smaller surveys throughout the year and an end-of-year district-wide survey. While there are many existing partnerships that have flourished, the school is striving to do more to bring in additional local professionals from a variety of fields, and work with more local businesses and colleges. The expanded the International Baccalaureate's Middle Years Program (MYP), and the Career Pathway Program is anticipated to require and promote the creation of new and lasting partnerships across the community.

## Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- department leaders
- NEASC survey

- parents
- school leadership
- self-reflection
- teacher interview



# Standard 4 - Learning Support

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## Narrative

Fitch High School continuously strives to provide its students the appropriate intervention strategies to support their academic, social, and emotional success. There are many intervention resources available and coordinating them has been a challenge. The school counselors handle most of the coordination of resources, but it can be difficult for them to communicate the directive intervention strategies in the context of the school's identification process and then follow up on the intervention plan in a timely and efficient manner. A formally defined process is in place for identifying and referring students. It starts with a referral form that teachers use, and the counselors reference it to take the appropriate next steps. The interventions that meet a particular student's needs are identified by the student support team (SST) and the resulting student plan is shared with all involved using a Google Form. There is widespread concern among the professional staff that no universal assessments are used at this time in this formal identification process. Many faculty members are concerned about the lack of other data, such as state testing, and the lack of continuity in classroom-based data, such as school-wide rubrics. In the past, NWEA testing was used for math and reading, and those results informed many decisions. There is added concern about the widely varied academic success of the ELL student population, as these students are struggling to be successful in the school's programs and courses, and there are not enough resources to provide personalized learning for their needs.

There was a communications goal last year and the school is improving this goal by using Powerschool and Schoology applications. Parents have access to those applications to monitor their children's work. Some parents don't have the resources or skills to access Schoology, so they are not always aware of the course-specific expectations. Parents also sometimes find it difficult to filter through all the communications and determine what is useful and important. They recognize that the website is new, but it is not updated regularly, and they believe a centralized location for all information would be useful. The professional staff uses email and phone calls to communicate with parents. There was a weekly newsletter, but that has not been going out during the unusual and significantly changed schedule due to the pandemic. The grade 9 parents find the transition between middle school and high school to be not as smooth as in past years because of the lack of, and irrelevant, communications.

All students receive counseling services that meet their personal, social, emotional, academic, career, and college counseling needs from adequate certified/licensed personnel. There are many certified counseling staff members, including social workers, psychologists, and school counselors. The counselors meet their students on a regular basis, and juniors and seniors receive personal counseling, engage in course selection, and participate in parent planning meetings. However, freshmen and sophomores have some difficulty recalling the experiences of their counselor meetings even though counselors indicate these meetings indeed take place. According to the NEASC survey, 63 percent of students feel they are getting adequate services from their counselor and 54 percent of teachers feel that their students have access to their counselor when they need them. The school has a school-based health center (SBHC) that provides additional supports for the counseling needs of students if their families choose to use this highly valued and convenient resource. The developmental counseling program is navigated through the Naviance computer application and is collaboratively delivered by the students' advisory teachers along with the school counselors. Many community and area resources are available to the counseling staff, and students and the professional staff have confidence in accessing these resources when needed.

All students receive health services that ensure their physical and emotional well-being from adequate certified/licensed personnel. The highly skilled school nurse is supported by a school health aide and has further technical support through the local Visiting Nurse Association. The school nurse's office conducts all appropriate grade-level screenings along with the necessary communications related to those screenings. The SBHC also provides highly skilled services with an APRN, mental health clinician, and a part-time secretary. This center has proven to be very helpful for the many transition needs of the large military population that the school district serves. The school nurse and the SBHC work as a team on public health initiatives, particularly during the pandemic when the urgency of communications to the community for promoting how to be safe and maintain well-being has been necessary. The school nurse is welcomed to attend school staff meetings, SST meetings, and other meetings related to the health of students. The nurse assists in referring students to resources both inside the school and in the community outside of school. Informal feedback with parents and students provides the

school nurse with information on how to improve the school's health services. For example, the nurse attended a recent Zoom call and witnessed the anxiety of the participants, and, as a result, recommended more frequent communications with those involved and is seeking more support services to address these emerging needs created by the pandemic. According to the NEASC survey, 92% of parents feel that their children have access to health services when they need them.

All students receive a wide range of library/information services that support their learning from adequate, certified/licensed personnel. The library/media center and library/media specialist are available to students before and after school, normally opening at 7:10 a.m. and closing at 3:00 p.m., and are responsive to students' needs. Usually, there are two staff members in the library/media center to serve students, a certified library/media specialist, and a library technical assistant. However, the recently opened middle school on the high school campus has needed the certified library/media specialist to complete the set up of their new library/media center. Eventually, this second staff person will be shared between the middle school and high school library/media centers. The lead library/media specialist has been at the high school for many years and remains an important resource as students and staff who transitioned to mostly distance learning at the end of last year and this academic year. The library/media center serves as a front-line help desk to triage computer issues for the district's information technology department. The school had already begun the distribution of Chromebooks before the pandemic, and continued coordination of distribution, as well as supporting their use, during the recent distant learning and hybrid learning times. During normal times, the library/media specialist logs in about 300 class support events each year plus two formal library/media center services lessons for new students. The library/media specialist also supports teachers in their development of lessons that require research and technology. The library/media center is visited often because it is the only place where students can print documents, and seniors use it during their unscheduled time. The library/media center has space for two classes to meet and work on projects; however, the library/media center is housed in the section of the building that needs updating. The library/media center has had no budget for the last ten years. As a result, there have been no new furnishings or physical changes, such as electrical and Wi-Fi renovations have not been done in many years, so the learning environment has a vintage appearance. The public library has been recently renovated and the school's library/media specialist would like to use their plan for a renovation at the high school. The library/media center is large enough to add a maker-space to promote innovative student projects. The library/media center has a good book circulation with young adult literature, but the non-fiction collection has less circulation because students use online resources, such as Research CT or the interlibrary loan program. The writing and research application, Turn It In, is used by teachers, but it is not part of the library/media center's resources. The library/media center staff is responsible for having all students sign the school's technology acceptable use policy when they are issued a Chromebook.

Students with special needs and 504 plans receive appropriate programs and services that support their learning from adequate certified/licensed personnel. The identified ELL students have limited support for their learning with a part-time ELL certified teacher. There is very limited collaboration between ELL certified teachers and the faculty members who teach and support the ELL students in the mainstream college-level classes. According to the NEASC survey, 67 percent of teachers agree that there is a clear and timely process for finding additional supports for their struggling students. There are two classroom aides who are able to help the Spanish-speaking students. The school has about 170 students with individual education plans and about 100 students with 504 plans that serve their special needs to allow them to be successful. Every student with special education needs has a case manager who monitors his or her progress, communicates with parents, and schedules meetings whenever necessary in order to meet his or her needs. There is no universal assessment program for monitoring student progress at this time and the professional staff is concerned about accurately reporting learning results and identifying appropriate resources for intervention.

## Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- facility tour
- NEASC survey
- parents

- school leadership
- school support staff
- self-reflection
- students
- teacher interview
- teachers

# Standard 5 - Learning Resources

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## Narrative

The Groton, Connecticut community and school district provide sufficient school buildings and, with some exceptions, adequate facilities that support the delivery of high-quality curriculum, programs, and services. The building is safe, secure, and, for the most part, a healthy environment that supports the diversity of the student body. The Fitch High School building is adequately sized for the current population of around 1,000 students. Based on school maps and a video program that showcases the facilities, there are appropriate spaces to support student learning and the curriculum. The older areas of the multi-aged facility need some renovations to provide similar and adequate learning environments that the newer parts of the building can offer. This includes the need for expanding spaces to accommodate growing programs such as the theater program, improving heating and air conditioning, adding screens in all windows that open, providing adequate power and digital access, and replacing older and fragile furnishings that can ensure flexible learning environments. Outdated technology or technology that cannot be repaired is also a problem throughout the facility. The athletic department staff members are concerned about many years of poor maintenance and lack of investment in upgrading their areas which they feel has diminished their ability to have a successful program. Although an academic wing addition was completed in 2006, other areas of the school and outside on its campus grounds have not been updated, renovated, or properly maintained in many years. According to the NEASC survey, 76 percent of teachers and 65 percent of students agree that the building and grounds support learning. While this is a high percentage of the school community, those impacted by the areas that are in disrepair find that they cannot ensure the delivery of high-quality curriculum, programs, and services. Considerable attention was dedicated to the community approval, construction, and opening of the new middle school building that is now located on the same campus as the high school. The recently announced outgoing superintendent emphasizes the need for intensive focus by the entire district to support the Groton 2020 plan. He views the success of this plan, which largely includes the new middle school project, as an asset that impacts the quality of education for the entire district. He emphasizes how it will help the high school because it will provide improved opportunities for collaboration across the middle and high school grades. Several areas of the building are dedicated to special services for students. The school has an alternative high school program, the New Beginnings Alternative program, which has its own exclusive classroom suite, including an administrative office and classrooms for the students assigned to it during the school day. The building is clean and well-maintained. According to the NEASC survey, 90 percent of parents are happy with the maintenance of the building, and 56 percent of students agree. The custodial staff cleans day and night, and they also see that safety regulations are being followed. Their regular procedures are logged into a book in the head custodian's office, and work orders are submitted when necessary. The buildings and grounds department works with the school to monitor temperature data; however, building temperatures fluctuate significantly in both warm and cold weather and this is particularly a problem in the older sections of the building. The building meets all applicable federal and state laws and is in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations.

The school/district provides sufficient time and financial resources to enable researched-based instruction, professional growth, the development and implementation of instruction, and improvement of school programs and services. Four days of the week, the school day begins at 7:25 a.m. and ends at 2:07 p.m. Each Tuesday, the school day begins at 7:25 p.m. and ends at 1:00 p.m., allowing for release time that is usually used for professional development programs. However, this time was not in use during the pandemic's unusual distance learning and hybrid learning schedule, and there is some discussion underway to replace this release time with other professional time in the future. The school provides a generous amount of time to support research-based instruction, professional collaboration among educators, the learning needs of all students, and student programs and services. Each Wednesday, core academic grade 9 and grade 10 teams, including world language attend a Middle Years Program in-service workshop that supports the continued development of an IB school system. The assistant principal is charged with providing substitutes for teams of four teachers at one time. Also, substitute coverage is provided to those teachers requesting to observe colleagues teaching strategies in an effort to strengthen, align, and improve teaching practices. This can include attending Instructional Rounds with school leaders with the goal to ensure additional professional growth and to assure student learning is based on school

goals and initiatives. Also, the school has scheduled, every other day, common preparation periods for each department. According to the NEASC survey, 77 percent of the teachers believe that they have used the opportunity to collaborate weekly within the school day; however, this common planning time is not always used for collaboration among educators. For example, the science department uses this time to coordinate the sharing of equipment. There are no formal expectations for using this common planning time for professional development purposes. In addition to the common planning time, there is sufficient time and resources available for professional development, evaluation and revision of the curriculum, and improvement of instruction using assessment results and current research. Although there is generous time allocated to professional development, according to the NEASC survey, 59 percent of teachers find that an appropriate amount of time is provided for professional development. The overload of initiatives over the years has overwhelmed the professional development schedule. There are five full-day professional development days and a minimum of 35 or more hours on Tuesday afternoons devoted to professional development throughout the school calendar each year. The content of the professional time provides opportunities to enable researched-based instruction, such as International Baccalaureate Training (IB), Middle Years Program Training (MYP), National Urban Alliance Training (NUA), Mindset Training, Physical and Psychological Management Training (PMT), Mindfulness Training, technology integration, and curriculum development. During Tuesday afternoons, teachers are provided collaborative time to meet. In addition, a minimum of 60 minutes is dedicated to weekly meetings that rotate between staff meetings, department meetings, and teacher learning initiative (TLI) which is formatted to provide teacher-to-teacher directed learning. TLI topics may include building initiatives, mandated training, professional collaboration, and curriculum writing and review. Funding for outside of district professional development comes from three different sources: the district's budget which includes grants funding new programs, the building budget, and each department also allocates funds for content-specific professional development. These funds, although limited, have been adequate in supporting the continuous development of the district and school initiatives; however, the professional staff is concerned that there is a lack of continuity in supporting the continuous addition of initiatives. For example, the NUA teaching strategies have almost been forgotten only two years later.

The community and the district's governing body provide adequate funding to fully implement the curriculum and other learning opportunities. In addition to core academic classes, Fitch High School encourages students to take advantage of the many specialized courses within the art department, culinary department, music department, technology and computer education department, business education, and physical and health education department. However, there are some co-curricular programs that lack adequate and dependable funding, and class sizes in the lowest level of the three-level course offerings are considered too large to serve the diverse student learning needs. According to the Groton Public School Board of Education, 2019-2020 Budget Report, the Groton Board of Education along with local government officials saw fit to increase the Fitch High School's budget from \$161,896 to \$274,950 to support the school and assure that student programs, services, and resources are viable for student learning. Given this increase in funding, the school has been able to maintain and increase students' options by offering a wide variety of curriculum through each of the academic departments. Students are able to choose courses including Early College Experience courses, Advanced Placement courses, International Baccalaureate courses, Career Pathways, APEX virtual learning, and many others. The school also provides academic support, including a recently added reading specialist with a reading support program, English intervention, math intervention, an alternative high school, and Falcon Academy, which is an after-school intervention program. The school provides services for special education students as well as special education students transitioning from high school to career readiness. However, there are some concerns that the services provided to the English Language Learners are limited because the ELL specialist is part-time, and there is no collaboration among the specialist and the faculty members who teach the ELL students. The maximum class size guidelines for the district is 25 students; however, educators have concerns about serving the diverse learning needs in the college prep course level. The basic level courses, which were once the lowest level of the rigorous curriculum of the four-levels of course offerings, were removed from the schedule in 2018, and the students that were assigned to that level are now assigned to the college prep level. Educators' concerns remain prevalent even after a two-year transition of this level change. The teachers with experience teaching this level find that the number of students enrolled in the college-level courses is too high to provide adequate individualized instruction which directly impacts student success, skill-building, and overall achievement. Recent changes to the mode of instruction from full classroom to hybrid and distance learning due to the pandemic have required the district to increase its investment in technology. Therefore, the level of sufficient instructional materials is in a dynamic state this year. Prior to the pandemic, one grade level each year received school-issued

Chromebooks and the entire student population was on track to have Chromebooks issued this year. The challenging responsibility of distribution and maintenance of this important and necessary learning tool has been taken on by the library/media specialist and an information technology staff member. Prior to this year, dependable funding has not been sufficient for instructional materials and supplies, equipment, technology, and resources to support library/media center services and information technology. Updates for classroom technology have not been regularly funded, and, as a result, it continues to deteriorate. The Promethean boards in many of the classrooms are inoperable, there are a number of teachers with inadequate laptops, and there are not any adequate loaner laptops when a teacher's laptop needs servicing. The furnishings of the classrooms in the older areas of the school need to be replaced. They are showing their wear and tear after many decades of use, and they are not adequate for the flexible learning environments needed for current teaching strategies.

The school/district maintains short-term plans to address the maintenance needs of its building and facilities; however, the district's capital improvement plan does not address many needs in the building that have been apparent for many years. A schedule of regular maintenance and repair for the building can be found in the high school maintenance and repair plan. Ongoing and projected capital improvements are documented in the town's capital improvement plan. The older portions of the school need improvements to remain effective. That work includes the removal of asbestos, central air conditioning, and ventilation (HVAC). Some teachers believe that there are fire code and ADA accessibility code compliance issues. The high school staff is not aware of the district's capital improvement projects planned for 2020-2025. There have been many security improvements and some improvements are planned for the high school athletic facilities. While the tennis courts and a drainage issue for the football field are slated for repair in the current district CIP, quite a few areas of concern remain in the athletic areas on campus. Most of these concerns are due to the resources allocated towards the upkeep of the facility. Thirty years ago, the school was able to boast the best athletic facilities in this area of the state, but, currently, the facilities are not up to par with surrounding towns, which makes hosting tournaments almost impossible. The large and small gyms both have problems with their floors; for example, the new gym floor has not been refinished since 1982. The athletic area cannot be closed off to the rest of the school building during events outside of the school day. This means that the whole school is accessible after hours through the sports entrance, which is a safety and security concern. Outside of the gym area, the outdoor facility has a need for repair or renovation. While the tennis courts are slated for resurfacing in the current CIP, there are other needs for the outdoor spaces. Other areas that need updating to be more inclusive spaces include the football field and bleachers, which need better access to comply with the ADA. The field house adjacent to the field does not currently have comparable space for female athletes, and it needs renovation to meet Title IX requirements. Parking near the athletic spaces, even in off-site areas, is not adequate to meet the population demands. Nine sports play and practice off-site, which can create a series of issues. For example, the school's system of bussing students to practice has an impact on getting students to Falcon Academy, which is a learning support after-school program available to all students, as well as athletes in need of academic support to stay eligible to play. All these complications are managed by the athletic director who is part-time and works under the teacher's contract with a stipend and a special education caseload.

The school has improved the infrastructure and has specific protocols in place to ensure effective responses in crisis situations. The school has a school security and safety plan that addresses protocols for various crisis situations. The school maintains the crisis protocols by having students and staff practice evacuation and lockdown procedures multiple times each year. Emergency protocols, including evacuation and lockdown procedures, are posted in every classroom. The district has committed to the use of tiered building security protocols: Building Secure, Classroom Secure, and Lockdown. The faculty feels there are clear policies and procedures for managing crisis situations, and according to the NEASC survey, 95 percent of teachers are confident about how to react in a crisis. Students also feel confident that they know what to do in a crisis; and 67 percent of parents state that they are familiar with the school's crisis procedures, while 64 percent believe that the adults in the school know what to do in the event of a crisis. In addition to the school security and safety plan, there is a school security protocol that outlines the day-to-day procedures to maintain the safety of the students, staff, and visitors. There is a school safety committee that meets regularly to review and revise protocols for both emergency situations and day-to-day operations. All entrances to the building and classrooms remain locked in accordance with school protocol. The school retains a school resource officer who consistently roams the building throughout the school day. In addition, security cameras are positioned strategically in and outside of the school building and are displayed on television screens located at the front security desk. A comprehensive plan was created for the pandemic response that includes hybrid and full remote distance learning whenever needed.

Their flexibility and timely response to the school's safety were demonstrated when the school needed to switch from hybrid learning to distance learning for all high school students when a virus outbreak occurred. Additionally, in the 2019-2020 school year, the principal formed a response team for crisis management. Any staff member in the school can call on the response team by calling the main office, and a team of administrators, security personnel, mental health personnel, and the school nurse respond to the location necessary. The nurse and the head of the school counseling department have open communication with staff in reference to students with specific medical needs. A certified athletic trainer is present at football games, as well as an ambulance and multiple EMTs. The trainer also attends other varsity contact sports. There are three AEDs on campus, accessible in unlocked wall cabinets strategically located throughout the building, plus a portable AED can be provided to teams. The school nurses provide oral direction and written documentation to staff, on students with special physical/medical needs such as allergies, diabetes, and asthma. The nurses also provide regular communication and documentation to appropriate teachers, staff, parents, and coaches in accordance with the district's concussion policy.

## **Sources of Evidence**

- facility tour
- NEASC survey
- self-reflection
- teacher interview

# Priority Areas

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## Priority Area

**Priority Area for Growth #1:** All courses will have a complete curriculum in a unified format and that curriculum will be accessible on the district dashboard. Further, this curriculum will integrate the four pillars of the school's vision of the graduate and include required components for the emerging IB program. (2.2a and 2.2)

The Collaborative Conference visiting team concurs with the Priority Area of completing the curriculum as identified by the school.

School's Reflection:

- This goal will ensure students in all courses will have a common learning experience when teachers implement this curriculum with fidelity. Common assured learning experiences and common unit assessments are part of the district curriculum document, along with clearly stipulated "students will know" and "students will be able to" statements that are aligned to the CCSS as well as unit essential questions.
- If this goal is completed, the faculty will be working from common learning expectations to offer more consistent, supportive, and appropriately challenging rigorous instruction for all students in all classes. When students have explicit instruction in clearly defined curricular goals, measuring their progress can become more consistent in the teaching and learning community.
- This goal is aligned to NEASC Standard 2 which is Student Learning and more specifically principle 2 which states: There is a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments that includes units of study with questions, concepts, content, and skills and integrates the school's vision of the graduate. This goal aligns with the district priorities, as curriculum development and implementation are an integral part of the district's strategic plan and the Board of Education mission of teaching and learning.
- Success in this priority area will be measured when all courses have a working curriculum document that includes: dashboard access to all faculty members with curriculum documents that are in a common format, clear alignment to the Vision of the Graduate, and clear evidence that the delivered curriculum seen day to day in all classrooms in school is a manifestation of the written document.

Team's Response:

The school needs to create a plan and timeline with clear expectations to complete written curricula in all subject areas, as well as integrate the vision of the graduate attributes and expectations for measuring these attributes into the curriculum.

There are some curriculum documents in some courses, but only English courses have them complete, in a consistent format, and accessible on the district's website. The English department curriculum includes units of study with guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, and skills and integrates the school's vision of the graduate. A common board-approved "curriculum map" template is used for some courses; it includes course purpose, learning goals and understandings, units, standards, Bloom's Taxonomy levels, big ideas, essential questions, names of common unit assessments, and common/assured learning experiences, but it does not reference the vision of the graduate. Although these two formats are similar, the first format appears to be more in line with the high school's mission and vision. A third format that supports the IB program has been part of the school and district's effort to transition to an IB school campus. The visiting team encourages the school, with the support of the central office staff, to choose one format and stay with it throughout their ongoing process of completing this goal. The curriculum revision timeline document indicates a plan, but tracking progress and adjustments on the plan is not apparent. Curriculum documents are and should be dynamic because of the data-driven decision-making teachers make to adjust their teaching to meet the needs of their students. This dynamic nature will be very apparent and necessary as all educators experience the fallout of distance learning during the pandemic. These adjustments need to be documented in a regular systematic and useful way so the integrity of



the curriculum and the implementation of it endures between each cycle. A significant and purposefully identified portion of the curriculum unit creation or revision work is generally completed over the summer by a collaboration of teachers in the subject area who are paid for their time. Teachers report that the summer of 2020 was dedicated to curriculum compacting for distance learning during the pandemic and there is currently no schedule or plan for the continuation of the work in writing curriculum. The principal agrees that the dynamic nature of the curriculum needs to be documented because the investment in writing curriculum units is largely obsolete after the first year of implementation because the changes that occur are not documented and used in subsequent years.

## Priority Area

**Priority Area for Growth #2:** The school will improve the coordination of interventions by implementing a formal SRBI process which includes methods to identify, track, and evaluate student progress as well as follow up on communication to all involved to determine student success or continued need. (4.1a, 4.1, and 4.5)

The Collaborative Conference visiting team concurs with the Priority Area of improving the coordination of interventions as identified by the school.

### School's Reflection:

- Addressing this goal will ensure that the school will be able to support all students with a clearly defined SRBI protocol that includes identification, tracking, and evaluation of student progress for various concerns that may arise in the classroom or school-wide setting. These concerns include academic progress, behaviors, social-emotional issues, and concerns relevant to overall student wellness.
- This goal will address the needs of all students because through a sound SRBI process, struggling students will be provided with a team approach to working through relevant concerns and systems will be in place to support them.
- This goal is aligned with NEASC standard 4 which is Learning Support, and more specifically principle 4.1 which states: All students receive appropriate intervention strategies to support their academic, social and emotional success. This goal also aligns with the priorities in the district's strategic plan to provide high-quality teaching and learning to ensure success for all students.
- Success in this priority area will be measured by implementing the formal SRBI process and providing training for all teachers. Additionally, it includes building a schedule that allows for more fluid delivery of SRBI services, including entry into and exit from SRBI services and assigned times for teachers to provide the interventions.

### Team's Response:

The school needs to formalize the SRBI process to improve the identification and implementation of the range of intervention resources available and include the use of universal screenings for key learning areas for all students so at-risk students are ensured to be identified for the referral process in a timely way.

Most of the time students receive appropriate intervention strategies to support their academic, social, and emotional success. While the school has a wide range of intervention resources available, coordinating their use and follow-up has been a challenge. There is a process in place for identifying and referring students; It starts with a school-created ABC referral form that teachers use and the student's assigned counselor receives. The team meets and they determine if the student needs additional assistance and they define a plan. The student's school counselor communicates the plan. The school counselors do most of the work with the present process, but they admit it can be difficult to follow-up on the intervention plan in a timely and efficient way. The intervention process is driven by the teachers who make a referral for a struggling student. Referrals to the intervention process also come from the middle school staff when they transition their grade 8 students into high school. The interventions that meet a particular student's needs are identified in the student support team (SST) which is the school's version of the SRBI team, and the student plan is shared with all involved. Neither the referral form nor the plan created by the SST is connected to the tiers that the state department of education has for guidelines to the required SRBI programs.

Therefore, the communication of the plan does not define the level of interventions and other criteria that would help keep the plan on track for success. Assessment data used for referrals and determining the success of interventions is not dependable and not part of a continuum of information from a consistent source. This impacts the assurance of identifying all at-risk students for entering the intervention system. The school needs a universal assessment tool to improve this gap of information. The ELL population is also struggling to be successful in many programs, and there are limited appropriate intervention strategies for this small but growing student population. A new method of communication of intervention plans using a shared Google doc was developed while employing distance learning during the pandemic, and it appears to be a promising practice for the more formally defined intervention process in the future. It is unclear how parents are brought into this process; however, there was a communications goal last year and the self-reflection report said that the school is working on improving communication by using Powerschool and Schoology applications. Parents have access to those applications to monitor their child's work; however, some parents mentioned in an interview that it can be difficult to learn how and find the time to explore the information on these applications. The school requires teachers to attempt to contact parents before submitting the ABC form. In addition, they log all parent contact into the student intervention sheet as they continue through the process. They strive to make parents aware and involve them in the conversation regarding any interventions, modifications, and progress.

## Priority Area

**Priority Area for Growth #3:** The school will develop a common school-wide focus based on the district improvement plan and Vision of the Graduate and this will be driven by a school improvement plan that has measures for success for implementing the school's goals. (1.1, 1.2, 3.1a, and 3.1)

The Collaborative Conference visiting team recommends a modification to the Priority Area for developing a common schoolwide focus on the district improvement plan and vision of the graduate as identified by the school.

### School's Reflection:

- Addressing this goal will ensure that the school aligns all student programs, course offerings, and initiatives under a common focus. This focus will ensure that common instructional strategies be used with students every day in every classroom. This goal addresses student needs because in aligning all programs under a common focus, teachers will be able to work together to ensure success for every student.
- With this Priority Area, communicating across programs will need a particular focus to avoid the "siloing" that can occur in schools that have such a wide variety of choices for students. It is the school's intention that a variety of student opportunities becomes an asset rather than a divisive force; Students should see consistent messaging in the basic premise that they should choose the paths of study in which they will learn best and thrive.
- This goal is aligned to two NEASC standards as well as the district's strategic plan and the school's vision of the graduate.
  - The NEASC standard 1 - Learning Culture, specifically principle 1 which states: The school community provides a safe positive, respectful, and inclusive culture that ensures equity and honors diversity in identity and thought.
  - The NEASC Standard 3 - Professional Practices, specifically principal 1 which states: The school engages all stakeholders in the development and implementation of a school improvement/growth plan, which reflects the school's core values, beliefs, and about learning and vision of the graduate.
- Success in this Priority Area will be measured when the schoolwide focus is clearly defined and successfully unifies the varied programs in the school; furthermore, success means that all teachers can subsequently engage and collaborate in unified instructional methods which support that focus and bring real horizontal and vertical alignment in content areas as well as interdisciplinary instruction.

### Team's Response:

The school needs to fully implement the vision of the graduate and create a strong school improvement plan with

measures of success for each goal.

The visiting team's recommendation is more aligned to NEASC standard 1 - Learning Culture, specifically principle 2 which states: 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. We concur this Priority Area also aligns with standard 3, Principle 1.

Fitch High School's recently adopted vision of the graduate acronym is R.I.S.E., signifying that all students demonstrate growth towards:

- Resilient Individual: The Fitch graduate demonstrates a continuous commitment to personal growth and wellness by independently accepting challenges, engaging in hard work, and developing resilience to thrive as an individual.
- Innovative Learner: The Fitch graduate demonstrates a continuous commitment to intellectual growth in critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and knowledge across the disciplines.
- Socially Aware Citizen: The Fitch graduate demonstrates a continuous commitment to cultural understanding and interaction by actively promoting social awareness, civic responsibility, and dedication to the local and global community.
- Engaged Communicator: The Fitch graduate demonstrates a continuous commitment to effective and purposeful communication that exhibits open-mindedness, respectful collaboration, empathetic listening, and a clear, comprehensive presentation of ideas.

The vision of the graduate was created with input from the school community over a deliberate and inclusive five-month process and presented to the board of education in December of 2019. Students expressed minimal awareness of the VOG. However, the administrators and teachers expressed a willingness to align this vision to instruction and curriculum documents. The school's movement to integrate the International Baccalaureate's portrait of the graduate with the goals and components of the vision of the graduate is represented and embedded in RISE which is a promising practice for future improvement in this area. When a school improvement plan is written, it needs to include a future plan to assess and evaluate the success of the school-wide initiatives.

# Commendations

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## Commendation

The belief that all students are welcome at Fitch High School

The iconic motto: Achieve More, Believe More, Care More that is widely known and is a symbol of what the school values

The myriad opportunities for co-curricular activities found at Fitch High School

The faculty participation in the generous time allotted for professional development

The faculty openness to taking risks, including participating in student-led professional development

The department leadership to support initiatives and teacher growth

The IB program's CAS project to promote civic engagement

## Commendation

The adoption of the vision of the graduate ("RISE")

The recent curricular work that includes units of study, guiding/essential questions, concepts, contents, and skills

The focus on depth of understanding over a breadth of knowledge

The dedicated, structured department time outside of school hours for assessment development and subsequent analysis of student work

The voice and choice that is afforded to students

The expectation that students frequently engage in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking

The assessment strategies that are varied and include opportunities for students to showcase their knowledge in creative ways

The peer and self-assessment that are evident throughout classrooms

The teachers' comfortably integrating and managing many technological platforms simultaneously, allowing for enhanced student engagement

## Commendation

The Groton Public Schools' initiating an International Baccalariate Campus supported with a grade that will align all schools, including Fitch High School with the district's priorities

The staff's dedication to collaborating within departments on the provided Tuesday afternoon staff development time, finding this time invaluable to their professional practice

The department leaders leading staff to evaluate student data including student work

The generous amount of time allocated for professional development that sometimes includes curriculum development

The educators work to foster strong relationships with all families

The engagement of students in building relationships within and outside of the school by means of a variety of in-school programs and clubs, and outreach programs connected to surrounding businesses and post-secondary institutions

## **Commendation**

The plentiful resources for interventions that serve student needs

The availability of school counselors and social workers and their responsiveness to students' needs

The school-based health center and the school nurse team that provide extensive health and wellness services to the school community

The flexibility of the library/media specialist throughout the changing priorities of the library/media center in supporting teaching and learning through technology

The collaboration among all educators, particularly through the challenges of distant and hybrid learning, that is focused on meeting each student's goals

## **Commendation**

The increased security presence and communication of comprehensive plans for crisis response

The increased focus on the safety of the school community, including changes needed during the pandemic

The generous amount of time for professional development that serves to prepare teachers for the many initiatives for improving teaching and learning

The implementation of a 1:1 student Chromebook program that has become a valuable asset for teaching and learning

# Recommendations

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## Recommendation

Explore awareness of experiences for students of color to ensure a commitment to equity and diversity and then take action to rectify any lack of equity or diversity

Reinstate weekly professional development time with clear plans for implementation in accordance with a school-wide focus

Explore the development of the vision of the graduate (RISE) in promoting a mindset for personal growth and then ensure the promotion of the mindset

Ensure that opportunities for civic engagement apply to all students

## Recommendation

Provide professional development on tiered classroom interventions and differentiation strategies for struggling learners so all learners will have access to rigorous learning opportunities

Establish a consistent grading policy that separates feedback for work habits and academic skills

## Recommendation

Engage all stakeholders in the development and implementation of a school improvement/growth plan, which aligns with the district plan and which reflects the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate

Determine how the generous amount of time allowed for collaboration and professional development, e.g., Tuesday afternoons, five professional development days, common planning periods, individual release days, and optional paid summer curriculum writing, can be efficiently used to continuously review, revise, and develop useful and dynamic curricula

Expand work with data teams, add a system for documenting and communicating the decisions from this work for improving teaching and learning, and show student and school-wide progress in achieving the schools' vision of the graduate

Determine a vertical alignment within each subject area's courses, and clearly communicate it to all parents to assist them in making informed course-selection decisions with their children.

Explore how current programs are preparing all students to access and be successful in the most challenging courses to lead toward a more diverse and inclusive enrollment

## Recommendation

Ensure that school counselors clearly and more regularly communicate to all students, with more attention given to grade 9 and 10 students

Improve the furnishings of the library/media center to provide better use of the facility with technology and collaboration

## Recommendation

Improve learning environments so they are more conducive to teaching and learning in the 21st century with a focus on the older parts of the building

Improve the athletic facilities to be safe and serve all athletes and their spectators

Plan for a cohesive middle school and high school campus with shared goals and the resources to support those goals

Make explicit goals for common planning time outcomes

Prioritize the generous professional development time to better serve the implementation of the vision of the graduate

Ensure the long-term technology goals are adequately planned for and funded to meet the fast-changing dynamic educational needs of students and staff

# **FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES**

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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

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## **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

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## Chair(s)

**Chair: Ms. Michele Saulis** - New England Association of Schools & Colleges

**Assistant Chair: Mrs. Kimberly Gallo** - Shepaug Valley School

## Team Members

**Jenae Beauchamp** - RHAM High School

**Ms. Heather Persson** - Daniel Hand High School