New England Association of School and Colleges, Inc.

Commission on Public Schools

Commission on Public Schools

Report of the Visiting Team for Daniel Hand High School

Madison, CT

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School and Community Summary

School and Community Summary

Madison is located on the Connecticut shoreline, approximately 20 miles east of New Haven and 40 miles south of Hartford. Madison's population was nearly 18,000 as of the 2020 census. Home to one of the most frequently visited parks in the country, Hammonasset State Park, Madison is proud of being emblematic of the Connecticut shoreline and its tight-knit community despite a million visitors annually. According to census data, the median income of Madison residents is approximately $156,171 per year. Just over 63 percent of residents have earned a bachelor's degree or higher. According to data from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), 4.5 percent of families attending the Madison Public Schools were considered economically disadvantaged in the 2024-25 school year. An uptick in the housing market, along with Madison's diverse offerings, continues to attract a variety of families with students from many different backgrounds.

Over the past two years, the CSDE Next Generation Accountability System has identified Daniel Hand High School as a school of distinction. Even more impressive, between the Collaborative Conference visit in November 2022 and the Decennial visit in November 2024, the CSDE nominated the school for the highest level of national distinction. After completing the lengthy application process, we are excited to share that Daniel Hand High School has been named a 2024 National Blue Ribbon School for overall Academic Excellence.

The Madison Public Schools consists of six school buildings: one pre-K school, two elementary schools (grades K-3), one intermediate school (grades 4-5), one middle school (grades 6-8), and one high school (grades 9-12). An ongoing building project will result in the closure of the two elementary schools, the building of a new preK-5 school, and renovations to the grade 4-5 school to become K-5. The district currently educates 2,365 students in grades preK-12 (2023-24). Madison students can enroll in area technical or magnet high schools for grades 9-12. Additionally, students from other districts can apply to and attend Madison Public Schools if their families elect to pay the per-pupil expenditures. Enrollment in the Madison Public Schools has declined for several years but is expected to level out and rebound in the coming years. In the 2018-19 school year, the district had 2,763 students. Enrollment trends indicate a projected enrollment at or near 2500 by the 2025-26 school year.

The average per pupil cost is $24,601 (FY 2023), above the state average of $21,143. The approved fiscal year (FY 2025) school department budget is $63,645,156, more than 65 percent of the total town budget. The Town of Madison has been and continues to be generous and supportive in allocating resources to its public schools.

The four-year adjusted graduation rate for 2022-23 was 97.3 percent. The college entrance rate for the Class of 2023 was 93.6 percent, and the Class of 2024 had a college persistence rate of 96 percent. Outside the college pathway, 4 percent of students enrolled in a gap year, employment, or the military. The student attendance rate for 2023-24 was 94.05 percent.

Daniel Hand High School facilitates student-centered learning, as reflected by the town's investment in K-12 curriculum revisions (2014-present). The curricula are focused on developing the profile of a graduate transferable skills and fostering social and emotional learning. Despite declining enrollment, no programs have been eliminated. We continue to offer specialty courses such as Commercial Photography and an interdisciplinary Marine Science course, as well as a wide selection of courses for college credit, including advanced placement (AP) and the University of Connecticut Early College Experience (ECE) program. Furthermore, the unique trimester schedule allows students to take additional courses beyond the minimum graduation requirements, delving into career exploration and personal interests and averaging just over 29 credits (four more than the state requirement). Our course offerings include regionally and nationally recognized art and music programs. The academic program is further augmented by a plethora of co-curricular activities, including more than 70 active clubs and more than 600 student-athletes participating in interscholastic athletic teams.

Core Values, Beliefs, and Vision of the Graduate

DANIEL HAND HIGH SCHOOL

Mission Statement

Our primary purpose is to graduate enthusiastic life-long learners who are responsible global citizens. Daniel Hand High School students, in collaboration with educators, parents/guardians, and the community, will develop as motivated, self-reliant, creative, and ethical individuals who respect differences in others.

Core Values and Beliefs Statement

The Daniel Hand High School community will provide a safe, supportive, and respectful environment for students to develop critical thinking, creative problem solving, and effective communication. We will cultivate a collaborative and inclusive community that values and affirms the diverse contributions, strengths, and talents of all its members. Our expectation is that students will act with respect, courtesy, and empathy. We will provide an environment for students to find learning opportunities in both success and failure and take responsibility for their words and actions. We bear a responsibility to empower all students to become contributing members of a just society. As a learning community, we value compassion, intellectual curiosity, academic and creative risk-taking, and integrity.

Daniel Hand High School Commitments

The school will…

- provide appropriate facilities, resources, and support services to make learning accessible to all students.

All staff will…

- encourage students to be proactive in their learning, and will challenge students to meet or exceed standards in all programs.

All students and staff will…

- reflect on success and failure in order to develop resilience, perseverance, and a growth mindset.
- benefit from collaboration and partnership with civic, business, higher education, and other community groups and resources.
- engage in emotionally and intellectually safe learning within a secure school facility.

The school community will…

- encourage student curiosity, ingenuity, and creativity, thus empowering students to pursue their own intellectual inquiries.
- foster participation in activities that promote lifelong health and wellness for all staff and students.

Profile of a Graduate

Student Growth and Development Matrix

Critical Thinking	Creative Thinking	Collaboration / Communication	Self-Direction	Global Thinking

School Improvement/Growth Plan

The school improvement/growth plan is attached.

Related Files

- 2024_10_30-08_20_DHHS School Development Plan 2024-2027.pdf
- 2024_10_30-08_22_NEASC School Improvement Plan Final April 2023.pdf

Inquiry	Idea Generation	Collective Intelligence	Self-Awareness	Citizenship
Posing, pursuing, and refining significant questions to deepen understanding about a topic or issue.	Studying a problem, need or model (mentor text, political piece, documents, art work, etc.) to consider limitations and imagine new solutions/ transformations.	Working respectfully and responsibly with others, exchanging and evaluating ideas to achieve a common objective.	Examining current performance critically to identify steps/strategies to persist.	Identify, analyze and contribute to critical issues in society in an ethical and responsible manner.
Analyzing

Examining information/data/evidence from multiple sources to identify possible underlying assumptions, patterns, and relationships in order to make inferences. | Design

Engaging in a process to refine a product for an intended audience and purpose. | Product Creation

Effectively use a medium to communicate important information. | Decision Making

Make responsible decisions, based on potential outcomes. | Alternate Perspectives

Interpret or critique complementary and competing approaches, experiences, and worldviews in order to develop an empathetic perspective. |

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

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

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

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

Professional Practices

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

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

LEARNING SUPPORT

Learning Support

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

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

LEARNING RESOURCES

Learning Resources

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

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

Introduction

Introduction

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

The governing body of the Association is its Board of Trustees, which supervises the work of three Commissions: the Commission on Independent Schools (CIS); the Commission on Public Schools (CPS); 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 shows continued progress addressing identified needs.

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit

Accreditation coordinators and a steering committee composed of the professional staff were appointed to supervise the school's Accreditation process which includes the self-reflection, the Collaborative Conference visit, the development and implementation of a growth plan, and the Decennial Accreditation Visit.

Public schools seeking Accreditation through 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. In preparation for the decennial visit, schools are required to complete a Decennial Summary Report to inform the team about their progress since the time of the Collaborative Conference visit.

In addition, the professional staff was required to read and come to a consensus on the summary report to ensure that all voices were heard related to the school's progress on their priority areas for growth.

The Process Used by the Visiting Team

A visiting team of eight members was assigned by the Commission on Public Schools to conduct a Decennial Accreditation visit to Daniel Hand High School in Madison, Connecticut. The visiting team members spent four days conducting a visit to the school; reviewed the self-reflection, Collaborative Conference report, and Decennial Summary Report documents; met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students, and parents; and visited classes to determine the degree to which the school aligns with the Committee on Public Secondary Schools' and Public Elementary and Middle Schools' Standards for Accreditation and the degree to which the school is making progress toward their identified priority areas for growth as indicated in the school's improvement/growth plan.

Each conclusion in the report was agreed to by visiting team consensus. Sources of evidence for each

conclusion drawn by the visiting team are included 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. The report also includes an analysis of the conceptual understanding, commitment, competency, and capacity (4Cs), which is a framework used to evaluate the school's ability for continuous growth and improvement as a learning organization.

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

Foundational Element 1.1a - Learning Culture

Foundational Element 1.1a

The school community provides a socially and emotionally safe environment for students and adults. The school's commitment to fostering critical thinking and creative problem-solving is evident in its supportive and inclusive environment, which reflects its core values and the district's profile of the graduate. The portrait outlines the capacities all students must attain by the time they graduate, and these capacities promote the soft skills and transferable dispositions necessary to be "upstanding, constructive members of a diverse global society." Moreover, Daniel Hand High School's "helping hallway" allows students to engage in activities that foster social-emotional learning (SEL) and awareness. The school's commitment to supporting the whole child is further demonstrated in wellness Wednesdays, a 30-minute window for students and staff to set aside academics and focus on an SEL activity.A sense of belonging is a cornerstone of the school's culture, and, according to the NEASC survey, 80 percent of students feel welcome and 80 percent believe that peers from diverse backgrounds are treated with respect. Ally and safe space stickers mark classroom doors, and the campus includes three single-user, gender-neutral bathrooms to ensure inclusivity. The Gender and Sexuality Program (GASP) serves as a supportive space for LGBTQIA+ students, while a dedicated support team, comprising a clinician from Madison Youth and Family Services, a school psychologist, a social worker, and six school counselors, attends to the emotional well-being of learners. The school also provides extensive opportunities for self-expression, showcasing students' creative efforts through sculptures made in the Fab Lab, self-portraits from art classes, and flyers promoting various clubs. With over 60 elective courses, 54 active clubs, and a wide range of sports and theater arts programs, students have ample options to explore their interests. The school's vibrant atmosphere celebrates diversity and individuality, creating a nurturing space for all learners.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 1.2a - Learning Culture

Foundational Element 1.2a

Daniel Hand High School has a written document describing its core values, beliefs about learning, and profile of a graduate that includes the attainment of transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success. In 2022, the school completed revisions to its existing core values and beliefs statement, including commitments for various Daniel Hand school community members. The district created a committee of teachers, administrators, students, parents, and community members to begin developing their profile of a graduate in 2019. In 2021, the district completed work on its profile of a graduate with ten core competencies that students demonstrate from preK-12. The school completed work on embedding the profile of a graduate competencies into all units of instruction in curriculum documents and various performance-based assessments.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 2.2a - Student Learning

Foundational Element 2.2a

There is a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments across Daniel Hand High School. The district uses the Understanding by Design (UbD) template for all existing and new curriculum documents. These templates include content-area state standards, essential questions, enduring understandings, knowledge, skills, performance-based assessments, and learning paths with strategies and activities for learning. Departments created and reviewed performance-based assessments that align with and include competencies from the portrait of a graduate. Since the Collaborative Conference, curriculum documents were created for the remaining physical education, health and wellness, and performing arts courses. The district uses an extensive curriculum revision cycle process that involves teachers, administrators, and members of the curriculum review council. Steps in the process include multiple opportunities for feedback based on an evaluative checklist that helps ensure high quality in the curriculum design.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 3.1a - Professional Practices

Foundational Element 3.1a

Daniel Hand High School has a current school improvement plan. The 2024-2027 school development plan was adopted in June 2024 and provides the framework for the work underway, including goals and priorities, outcomes and performance targets, and success data. This plan contains detailed action steps, resources, and exemplars/evidence across four areas of focus: rigorous academics, positive school climate, staff development, and systems for student success. The school development plan was developed in collaboration with the district leadership team and the school leadership team, which included building administrators and department coordinators. This plan informs decision-making across the school.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 3.6a - Professional Practices

Foundational Element 3.6a

N/A

Foundational Elements 4.1a - Learning Support

Foundational Elements 4.1a

Daniel Hand High School has intervention strategies designed to support learners. The vertically aligned curriculum provides assured experiences and learning outcomes that strengthen classroom academic success. Many teachers stay after school with students who want or need extra help or enrichment. The school has a space for students to receive social-emotional support designated as a "helping hallway, " including a wait room with puzzles and calming activities. A student support team (SST) provides intervention through three avenues: one for mental health concerns, one as an educator professional learning community (PLC) that meets weekly by grade level to analyze grades and attendance data, and one dedicated to students who have been referred by teachers to the team. When teachers refer students to the team, the team creates a student plan and follows up on student progress after six weeks. A system in Infinite Campus exists for the SST to track students receiving intervention services and to link a Google Doc with notes on goals and supports, further ensuring open lines of communication with teachers. A liaison for the Madison Youth and Family Services provides support and information to students in a dedicated space in the library media center. Students with an individualized education plan (IEP) or 504 plan receive additional accommodations through their dedicated programming. A dedicated math Lab staffed by a math teacher is available for students to drop by during most periods of the day. In co-taught Algebra, teachers collaborate with special educators to pre-teach mathematical concepts to students, scaffolding those students for success in the general algebra classes; the school hopes to expand this model into geometry next year as part of a three-year plan.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 5.1a - Learning Resources

Foundational Element 5.1a

The school site and plant mostly support the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services. Daniel Hand High School is adequately sized to meet the school community's needs and its programs and services. The facility includes traditional classrooms, science labs, a library media center, a TV studio, computer labs, art studios, a robotics lab, and outdoor athletic fields. While the school has dedicated band and chorus rooms, no auditorium exists. Instead, all performances and assemblies are held in the dining and assembly hall, which can hold the entirety of the student body. Since the Collaborative Conference visit, Daniel Hand High School upgraded the lighting system in the dining and assembly hall; however, holding performances in this space can still present challenges for audience members and performers. Repairs and maintenance are done promptly, including an upcoming HVAC replacement scheduled for the summer of 2025.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 5.5a - Learning Resources

Foundational Element 5.5a

Daniel Hand High School provides a physically safe environment for students and adults. The district implements several practices that ensure a safeenvironment, inclusive of a full-time school resource officer, an anonymous reporting app called "See It, Say It, Send It," and Campus Shield's Personal Alarm Locator (PAL), which is a communication system that functions as a personal 911 beacon in case of emergency. Additionally, there are more than 125 surveillance cameras in various locations on school grounds. The cameras survey hallways and exits, allowing continuous monitoring throughout the school day. The review of recorded data is available to administrators, security personnel, and the town's emergency management departments.

Additionally, Daniel Hand High School's safety policies and processes include monthly fire and lockdown drills. During a fire drill, staff members assist students with the safe and timely exit of the building. All students and staff report to a designated location where attendance is taken. Students or staff members who cannot exit the building remain in the area of refuge with access to an intercom system, and security personnel confirm their location during each drill. To better address threatening situations, such as an active shooter, all staff members were trained in the alert, lockdown, inform, counter, evacuate (A.L.I.C.E.) protocols in 2020 and in 2022, which provide students and staff with effective response options.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Elements Ratings

Foundational Element Ratings

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

Priority Area 1

Priority Area

Complete the process of writing curricula driven by our core values and beliefs for the remaining content areas (physical education, health and wellness, and the performing arts). Fully embed the profile of graduate capacities and rubrics into the curricula adopted by the Madison Public Schools Board of Education. (2.1a, 2.1)

Action, Impact, and Growth

At the time of the Collaborative Conference, Daniel Hand High School had made significant progress in writing curricula in a common format driven by its core values and beliefs. They had begun to embed the profile of a graduate dispositions and rubrics into their written curricula using a common language.

Since the Collaborative Conference, the school has completed curricula for the remaining three departments - physical education, health and wellness, and the performing arts curricula. Teachers were given a combination of release and paid time during the summer to complete this process.

As of the 2024-2025 school year, the curriculum now includes learning goals, the profile of the graduate dispositions, essential questions, enduring understandings, knowledge, and skills. Additionally, performance-based assessment rubrics within all units of study in all content areas were updated to reflect the profile of a graduate capacities, which utilize common break-out rubrics across the school district.

Comprehensive written curriculums across all areas—encompassing skills, knowledge, essential questions, enduring understandings, and profile of the graduate capacities—are designed with a clear scope and sequence, common assessments, and common break-out rubrics to ensure a guaranteed and viable curriculum for all students. These curricular goals and actions have brought the school closer to alignment with the NEASC Standards. The completed curriculum ensures that all courses align with state and national standards.

The school's core values and beliefs, as well as the profile of a graduate, have guided curriculum development and revisions to address students' current learning expectations and needs. By embedding the profile of a graduate into all curriculum units, these efforts enhance instructional consistency within content areas.

The growth from these actions is visible on the school's curriculum website, where each unit of study across all content areas explicitly outlines the profile of a graduate capacities. This transparency ensures that students, families, and educators have a shared understanding of the essential skills and attributes being developed through the curriculum.

Furthermore, the school has made significant strides in incorporating the profile of a graduate into its instructional practices by embedding them into the majority of performance-based assessment rubrics. This integration aligns assessments with the profile of a graduate framework and provides students with meaningful opportunities to demonstrate their growth in these capacities through authentic, real-world tasks.

By making these capacities a focal point in instruction and assessment, the school reinforces their importance and ensures they are consistently prioritized in teaching and learning processes.

Recommended Next Steps

Analyze data from performance-based assessments within PLCs to identify trends in students' mastery of the portrait of a graduate capacities

Continue utilizing the curriculum review cycle to ensure portrait of a graduate capacities remain up-to-date and relevant within all content areas

Implement tools and practices to help students reflect on their growth in portrait of a graduate capacities, such as self-assessments, portfolios, or goal-setting activities

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- department leaders
- school board
- school leadership
- school summary report

Priority Area 2

Priority Area

Improve the structure of PLCs to support curriculum development and revisions, analysis of student data, action research on instructional strategies that support all learners, and collaboration among team members. (1.4, 1.5, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9, 3.2, 3.4, 4.5)

Action, Impact, and Growth

Daniel Hand High School redesigned its PLC structure to allocate two afternoon PLC meetings monthly throughout the school year. The leadership team put the PLC meeting dates on a calendar before the start of the 2024-2025 academic year and communicated that information to all certified staff members. Planning and communicating PLC dates in advance ensures that the time for PLC meetings is reserved for collaborative conversation. PLC meetings have an established framework focused on student performance. Guiding questions drive PLC meetings, including "What do we expect students to learn and/or be able to do? How do we know they learned it? And what will we do if they did not learn it?" In addition, PLCs committed to keeping minutes to document and monitor their progress throughout the year.

PLCs create and review performance-based assessments as part of each content-area curriculum. They also use common assessment data from Infinite Campus to monitor performance. In addition to analyzing and discussing student performance across disciplines, PLCs also facilitate student PSAT and SAT performance discussion. Special education teachers with students on their caseload in Algebra 1, for instance, are in a PLC with Algebra 1 teachers to analyze student pre-assessment data to inform pre-teaching in the Algebra 1 lab course. The world language department uses its PLC time to discuss best practices, calibrate grading assessments, and share student data. The science department collaborated to modify assessments to meet the needs of every student.

As a result of new state mandates for teacher evaluation plans, the school uses a new plan that allows teachers to create group goals that foster further teacher collaboration. For the 2024-2025 school year, the world language department is collaborating on one common goal under the new teacher evaluation plan. The school considers the leadership team meetings to be PLCs as well. Each month, the leadership team, comprised of administrators and program coordinators, conducts calibration meetings to collectively observe and discuss writing up evidence, commendations, and recommendations for teacher growth.

The PLC time is valuable collaboration time and assists teachers in coordinating consistent curriculum implementation and analyzing the results of performance-based assessments and other data sources.

The new teacher evaluation plan encourages teacher collaboration through setting and working towards group goals.

Teachers find collaborative time outside the afternoon PLC meetings valuable for calibrating grading procedures and discussing instructional strategies for reaching struggling students. Additional PLC time outside the bi-monthly one-hour after-school meetings would allow for more collaboration around curriculum planning and review and the analysis and implementation of data-driven decisions to enhance teaching and learning. Teachers of common courses can easily compare student achievement data and engage in the work of a PLC; however, teachers who do not have colleagues teaching the same courses cannot compare achievement data on common assessments.

Recommended Next Steps

Expand allocated PLC or other dedicated collaborative time for teachers during or after the school day

Create a structure for teachers without a common-course colleague to compare student performance data related to the profile of the graduate

Sources of Evidence
- central office personnel
- department leaders
- priority area meetings
- priority area observations
- school leadership
- school summary report
- teachers

Priority Area 3

Priority Area

Develop and implement plans to address the limitations of the physical layout for specialty areas to meet the needs of all learners, curriculums, and programs. (5.1a, 5.1)

Action, Impact, and Growth

Since the time of the Collaborative Conference visit, the school has made significant progress in achieving upgrades to the physical plant to ensure appropriate spaces for the delivery of high quality instruction. In 2023, $442,000 in capital improvement program (CIP) funds were allocated to upgrade the dining and assembly hall lighting. At no additional expense to the district, existing Google Workspace for Education resources were leveraged over the summer of 2024 to create a Google Calendar reservation system for all shared facilities at the school. A $3,245,000 allocation from CIP funds was used to secure the replacement of nine inefficient rooftop HVAC units; work is scheduled to begin in June 2025.

The scheduled replacement of the HVAC units in the summer of 2025 will create healthy environments and ensure appropriate mechanical systems to provide consistent climate conditions within the building. Implementing the shared Google Calendar for facilities reservations has ensured that appropriate facilities are available to support student learning by eliminating conflicts for academic and co-curricular programming. The lighting installation in the dining and assembly hall provides a state-of-the-art audio/visual system that supports student performances and events and provides potential avenues for continued technical learning for students.

Some areas of the building continue to present barriers to effective and appropriate programming. While the updates to the audio/visual components of the dining and assembly hall are positive improvements, the shared nature of that facility presents impediments to learning. The physical conversion of the space from a cafeteria to an auditorium is time-consuming, requiring approximately one hour of custodial time. The acoustics in the space are sub-optimal for musical performances. A critical lack of storage results in cramped instructional spaces; an acting class must conduct a lesson on a thin strip of the stage between two curtain drops. That same acting class could only utilize the full stage for the first time this school year in November. During that activity, students on the stage had to compete with cafeteria noise and distractions related to students and staff obtaining meals. The auditorium-style seating in the dining and assembly hall is collapsible and stored against a wall; when deployed for an audience, the seating is cramped, creating auditory distractions during performances. Spectators not in the temporary seating must utilize benches converted from cafeteria tables, which are uncomfortable for any extended period of time.

Due to its original design and layout, the main gymnasium has considerable space constraints. Once rolled out, the spectator bleachers occupy one-third of the playing space. Consequently, the facility cannot be used to host athletic competitions for which large crowds must be accommodated. For instance, the boys basketball team, which draws a large crowd, must play its games in the middle school gymnasium.

The lighting improvements in the dining and assembly halls have allowed students involved in stage technical lessons to advance their learning to industry standards. Implementing the Google Calendar for reserving shared facilities has eliminated all scheduling conflicts, improving students' access to appropriate facilities for athletic and co-curricular activities. Currently, no long-term plans exist to correct the concerns regarding the shared nature of the dining and assembly halls or the space constraints in the main gymnasium.

Recommended Next Steps

Develop a long-term plan that continues to address the concerns specific to programming in the dining and assembly hall and the main gymnasium

Sources of Evidence
- central office personnel
- classroom observations
- department leaders
- facility tour
- priority area meetings
- priority area observations
- school leadership

Part 3 - Reflection on Student Learning

Reflection on Student Learning

Instructional practices are designed to meet the learning needs of each student. Algebra students who need extra support have access to an Algebra lab that provides pre-teaching of content to help that population of students succeed in class. Teachers differentiate instruction in various ways, though it is most noticeable through the design of class assignments that offer student choice. Using Google Workspace for Education tools, teachers can assign work and provide resources to students that are appropriately leveled for them without making it obvious to other students in the class that students are receiving differentiated assignments. In a life skills class, students with special needs practice problem-solving skills by using the CUBES problem-solving strategy to assist them. Students in a variety of subject areas, including science and world language, can select topics of their choice for projects and presentations, allowing students the opportunity for a more individualized educational experience. In a career and technical education (CTE) class, a lengthy project and its requirements are modified based on whether students work in groups or alone. On a Spanish assignment, students complete a choice board assignment where they select several activities to demonstrate their learning. Teachers use formative assessment in a variety of ways. In a math class, a teacher uses warm-up questions to determine what practice questions to use later in the lesson. Across curricular areas, students work in collaborative groups to complete projects, discuss content, and meet informally to complete classwork. Teachers often purposefully group students together based on their needs. Math labs and other support classes offer students additional interventions for those in need. Co-taught math classes and paraeducator support are among the tiered intervention strategies in place. Students have access to rigorous learning opportunities across the curriculum. AP and ECE classes are offered in most subject areas.

Students have many opportunities to lead their learning actively. All students must pass the independent project class, where they investigate a topic of personal interest and, ultimately, create a shared final product. Students choose the profile of a graduate capacities most meaningful to them as they take part in creating the rubric used for project evaluation. They can access faculty guidance and a wide range of resources, including the FabLab, to complete their projects. In business classes, students set their own learning goals related to individual performance-based assessments, where they are tasked with applying their knowledge to develop a business plan as part of a project. Acting as health nutritionists in a health class, students create plans to meet a client's health goal. They analyze profile information, complete a fitness questionnaire, and create a SMART goal. CTE students design and film public service announcements for a civic need as part of a performance-based assessment. Students have numerous opportunities for creative expression. In a psychology class, students create models of neurons in an artistic format. Electives allow students to express themselves creatively in many ways, from offerings in music and performing arts to visual arts and CTE courses. In Latin classes, students are offered creative choices in a culminating project where they choose whatever media they want to showcase their learning. Students present in various formats, including storytelling, writing and recording a song, and a slideshow. Finance students create their own stock portfolios and trade stocks to increase the value of their portfolios. In social studies class, students create an expansion team by researching price, product, promotion, and place. They create a presentation to illustrate their selection.

Learners regularly engage in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills. Learning and assessment experiences are designed purposefully to be cognitively challenging, requiring students to develop and exercise a full range of thinking skills and learning dispositions. Each unit within the curriculum for every course contains at least one performance-based assessment measured using relevant capacities identified in the school's profile of a graduate. These capacities include inquiry, analysis, alternative perspectives, design, and product creation. In health classes, students use the DECIDE model to consider decision-making about a specific scenario. In a CTE class, students were presented with a real-world scenario that required them to apply their understanding of string manipulation. In an English class, students present to the class on a controversial topic and then lead a class discussion using questions they posed to the class; the rubric for this assignment focuses explicitly on the level of analysis and making connections to course content. In a math class, students work collaboratively to solve problems on whiteboards; once completed, the group of students is then assigned a more complex problem. Students use reasoning and analysis of evidence to evaluate positions and arguments in social studies

classes. In US History, students examine the United States' actions in World War II and the aftermath of 9/11 to determine their morality. In a physics class, students assess data and identify criteria to determine the most appropriate formulas for the context.

Students experience a wide range of assessment practices that support and improve their learning. These practices include the use of both summative and formative assessments. Teachers assess in both formal and informal ways. Many teachers ask warm-up questions that are used to inform later instruction during class. Some teachers use exit slips to inform their teaching and discern content that may need to be reinforced. For instance, in a co-taught Algebra I class, a special educator grouped students according to their responses from a homework assignment. Another example of using formative assessment data is in a physical education class where students evaluated their strengths and weaknesses after a badminton lesson. Some teachers used questioning strategies in classes across curricular areas to assess student understanding. All courses use rubrics that are aligned with the school's profile of a graduate. As the curriculum was developed, performance-based assessments were embedded into individual courses that all teachers, regardless of who is teaching a particular course, must include, which ensures consistent and equitable learning opportunities. Numerous performance-based assessments are commonly used across classrooms in the school. Students create and then critique magazine covers in an art class. In an English class, students design informational posters about memoirs they have recently read. In social studies, students rated presidents based on specific attributes and skills and then defended their ratings aloud to the class. Students are provided with specific and measurable criteria for success in their assessments. In a biology class, students are given a handout with detailed instructions, a bulleted list of assessment criteria, and a rubric. The teacher also uses a grading checklist that mirrors the assessment criteria. In a social studies class, students create group slideshows. The assignment criteria included a specific format and order for the slides, with headings and main ideas that should be conveyed. A clear rubric and checklist are included in the student handout. Checks for understanding occur regularly through entrance and exit slips, teacher questioning, and teacher check-ins. During US History presentations, the teacher asked clarifying questions to ensure the student presenters fully understood the content they shared. Students have ample opportunities to present their learning to authentic audiences, especially to other students. Presentations are the norm in English, social studies, and world language classes. Students in a performing arts class perform skits in front of the rest of the class and visiting administrators. In applicable independent project classes, students work with professionals related to the topic of their study.

Learners have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning, receive corrective feedback, and use that feedback to support their learning meaningfully. Demonstration of learning occurs through a variety of opportunities, including traditional tests and quizzes, group assignments, class discussions, and presentations. Within each unit, students complete a performance-based assessment. During class time provided for project work in several subject areas, teachers circulate the room, meet with students, and provide feedback and direction to students as they work. Within ten minutes, a science teacher provides quick and actionable feedback to half of the class while also being able to check in with several other students. An art teacher circulates the room to offer feedback and suggestions to students working on art projects, ensuring they are on the right track. When reviewing for an upcoming math exam, students in a co-taught math class work in small groups to solve a set of problems in a quiz show review game; the first team to answer correctly has to explain how to solve the problem. Both teachers in the class provide constructive feedback during the exercise to guide understanding. Teachers are often available to answer questions, clarify, and offer feedback while students work on assignments. On a world language assignment, the teacher provides extensive feedback on the rubric related to areas that need improvement and on the submitted work with clarifying questions and corrections. Teachers comment directly on students' documents in Google Classroom to provide feedback. Students can resubmit assignments in some classes for extra credit or to be reevaluated. School policy allows students to retake assessments in most classes to demonstrate progress toward mastery of content and concepts. As part of a physical education class, students complete a self-assessment in their archery unit, tracking areas where they need improvement and what adjustments they need to make to improve. Peers provide feedback to their classmates when afforded the opportunity. Work habits and academic skills are assessed in sections appropriate to their needs on rubrics.

Students use technology across all curricular areas to support, enhance, and demonstrate their learning. All students have a Chromebook and use the Google Suite (Classroom, Docs, Slides, etc.). Technology is utilized in different ways depending on the course and content studied. In business classes, students learn how to use spreadsheets to manipulate and analyze data related to the stock market. In the independent project class,

students use a wide assortment of equipment for their self-designed projects, including 3D printers, CAD software, engineering programs, laser cutters, and sewing machines. These students also design websites or digital portfolios that showcase their learning and are then shared with a wider audience. CTE students use architectural software to design homes and a full suite of television production equipment to produce news reports. World language classes frequently use the language lab to listen to and speak with their peers or record spoken assignments. Other world language classes film video presentations. English classes use graphic design programs to create a digital poster representing their thinking. In social studies classes, teachers provide students with online resources they can use to conduct research. The library media center maintains subscriptions to a wide range of online databases that teachers and students utilize for research. Science students work collaboratively to create and design a presentation in Google Slides. A chemistry class uses pressure sensors, hot plates, and LabQuest software to complete a vaporization lab. Math students use an online graphing program to investigate the transformations of the sine and cosine functions. US History students record oral histories of people who have experienced significant historical events. Using Google tools allows students to work collaboratively within the same document in world language and social studies classes. Various computer labs in the school are used for different subject areas. For example, a music class utilizes a lab for a piano and digital audio course. Teachers throughout the school use interactive whiteboards to display class agendas and digital timers and to post class objectives. Students in an anatomy class have access to an EKG device to use as part of the cardiovascular unit.

Part 4 - Capacity for Continuous Growth as a Learning Organization

Conceptual Understanding

Daniel Hand High School demonstrates a shared understanding of effective learning, grounded in its commitments from the school, staff, students, and the school community. The school provides appropriate facilities, resources, and support services to make learning accessible to all students. All staff encourage students to be proactive in their learning and will challenge students to meet or exceed standards in all programs. The independent project, for example, allows students to design their own learning in the spirit of the profile of a graduate. All students and staff reflect on success and failure, benefit from collaboration and partnership with civic, business, higher education, and other community groups and resources, and engage in emotionally and intellectually safe learning within a secure school facility. Students with special needs volunteer in local businesses, such as DSW and Stop and Shop. The school community encourages student curiosity, ingenuity, and creativity and fosters participation in activities that promote lifelong health and wellness for all staff and students. Students can participate in a number of sports teams, from fencing to field hockey, as well as a number of active clubs, such as Smiles for Smilow and Clay Club, where students can showcase their talents.

The district completed the process of writing all curricula in a common format driven by its core values and beliefs, which provide the foundation for its profile of a graduate. The profile of a graduate outlines the capacities and rubrics embedded into the Madison Board of Education adopted curricula. Posters displayed in all instructional areas and throughout the building provide visual evidence of the profile of a graduate. Evidence can also be identified in specific courses, such as personal finance and the independent project, both requirements for graduation. In other curricular areas, capacities are embedded in units of study and incorporated into at least one performance-based assessment (PBA) per trimester. These capacities are assessed utilizing customizable rubrics, which can be adapted for each course.

The learning community's clear structure extends from the district level down to the student population. On one hand, curriculum revision emanates from the assistant superintendent, supported by the curriculum lead. The curriculum lead works closely with program coordinators to develop and implement the curriculum. Program coordinators meet regularly with staff to ensure the curriculum is implemented with fidelity and discuss potential concerns or revisions.

Daniel Hand High School has been named a School of Distinction on the Connecticut Accountability Index for the past two years and a 2024 National Blue Ribbon School for overall academic excellence.

Commitment

There are several stakeholder groups committed to the school's understanding of effective learning, Priority Areas, and the profile of a graduate, many of whom have contributed to the school development plan (SDP). These include student members of the class council/student leadership team, members of the school's parent-teacher organization (PTO), and several faculty members and administrators. The SDP recognizes several key areas with a focus on the school's vision statement: "every child, every day, leading the way." In academics, goals are centered around rigorous curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Goals address positive school climate and culture. Staff development is essential to retain talented staff, and goals are included to support systems for student success.

Several key initiatives influence practice. With the support of an outside educational specialist, Algebra 1 classes have been de-leveled, and a 30-minute Algebra 1 lab has been added to support students with areas of need. Next year, level 3 Geometry will be removed from the school's course offerings, and, in the following year, level 3 Algebra 2 will be removed. There will be level 2 and honors offerings in Geometry and Algebra 2. These changes will provide students with a more equitable and inclusive environment.Another educational specialist has helped to support initiatives in English. In addition to educational consultants, there is evidence of other initiatives

influencing practice.*Building Thinking Classrooms* encourages the use of vertical white spaces in the math classrooms, though, through the use of the PLCs, many initiatives like this one can be shared among other staff members.

The freedom of choice entrusted to students demonstrates that school community members are committed to a growth mindset. At any point in time, students may use their unstructured time in a variety of ways. For example, seniors may enjoy the privilege of studying on the "bridge," while others may actively seek help from teachers stationed at various positions. Some may even choose to enjoy their lunch period with their favorite teacher. It is uncommon for any student to display a pass nor is there any indication of a pass system, rather students are entrusted to hold themselves accountable for their actions. Wellness Wednesdays further illustrate a way in which the entire student body is allowed the opportunity to participate in activities of their choice. Lastly, the school supports a number of clubs and athletic teams available to students.

While the school has addressed each of the Priority Areas, it is clear that the school is committed to ongoing school improvement. In their respective PLCs, educators have the autonomy to drive their own learning based on their needs. Teachers and administrators agree that there is a clear need to provide more PLC time. In addition, although there is a need to make revisions to the curriculum, it is often difficult for teachers to make changes to the higher stages of the curriculum, which require a more stringent chain of approval.

Competency

To begin the year, teachers establish at least one goal for professional growth, which is tied to the school development plan or school improvement plan. Each goal is evaluated in accordance with one quantitative and one qualitative measure. All plan aspects are recorded using Frontline. Tied to professional growth, the newly implemented teacher evaluation plan, which follows the Danielson Framework for teaching, is critical in assessing the educators' competence across four domains. Evaluators participate in a calibration process a minimum of eight times per year to be sure the plan is implemented fairly and with fidelity. Non-tenured teachers are observed by administrators four times per year, three within a unit of study plus one additional classroom evaluation unless another unit study is warranted. Tenured teachers are observed and evaluated by program coordinators twice per year. Data from these evaluations are entered in Frontline.

The student support Team (SST) strategically provides tiered support based on its knowledge of specific students and understanding of academic and social-emotional goals. The SST provides intervention through three avenues: one for mental health concerns, one as an educator PLC that meets weekly by grade level to analyze grades and attendance data, and one dedicated to students who have been referred by teachers to the team. When teachers refer students to the team, the team creates a student plan and follows up on student progress after six weeks.

Capacity

There is a school-wide focus on improving the efficacy of professional learning communities (PLCs). PLCs meet twice a month on Tuesdays after school for an hour to allow for collaborative discussion in all departments. The school leadership team, which includes department program coordinators and administrators, created a common calendar to communicate meeting times and dates for all PLCs. The PLCs are intended to review curriculum and instruction, instructional practices, and analysis of student learning data in the spirit of the profile of a graduate. For example, members of an Algebra 1 PLC, which includes co-teachers, were tasked to identify key takeaways upon the conclusion of the first trimester. There was also a shared initiative to address specific content areas, which will be introduced in the second trimester. Another PLC shared instructional strategies to align practices across similar content areas vertically. In addition, PLCs often seek the support of educational specialists. One such specialist helped the school de-level Algebra 1, and another helped to support initiatives in English. PLCs also allow teachers time to collaborate to align assessments and ensure PBAs address specific capacities of the profile of a graduate. While the feedback from staff has been very positive, more time is needed for PLCs to meet, preferably during the school day.

To the extent that a majority of time has been devoted to the development of the curriculum and PLCs, more professional development is needed to improve instructional practices, similar to how *Building Thinking Classroom*s has fostered a need for vertical white spaces in mathematics classrooms to develop a more student-centered model in the classroom.

The community and the district's governing body provide adequate and dependable funding to implement the curriculum fully, which helps provide many resources to students. A FabLab, which once started as a small maker space, has grown significantly due in part to its sheer popularity and the overwhelming demand from students who utilize the space to complete their independent projects. As needs arise, funding supports additional equipment and resources in a continuously growing space. In addition, funding has also been provided to equip classrooms with interactive whiteboards to support instruction. However, training may help inspire faculty to use them to enhance their instructional practices further and provide students with a more dynamic visual learning environment. In addition to targeted school funding, the district has invested in upgrades to the lighting system in the dining and assembly hall and significant upgrades in the building's HVAC system.

Additional Information

Additional Information

Standard 1 Principle 2

School's rating in the Self-Reflection report: Developing

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the School

Daniel Hand High School is implementing Principle 1.2. The school's core values, beliefs about learning, and the profile of a graduate have been articulated, aligned, and implemented in all curricular areas.

According to the 2021 Daniel Hand Student Survey, 68 percent of students are familiar or very familiar with the school's core values and beliefs. A committee of parents, students, teachers, and administrators provided feedback and participated in the revision of our core values and beliefs statement, a process that was completed in the Spring of 2022. Per the Daniel Hand Faculty Survey, 85 percent of faculty find the school's core values and beliefs influence the way the academic program is designed.

The profile of a graduate steering committee was formed in the fall of 2019 to create Madison's version of the vision of a graduate. The committee was composed of 28 members, including representation from the board of education, parents, students, administrators, teachers, program coordinators, and instructional coaches. Prior to developing the profile of a graduate, we had a 21st century skills matrix (first developed in 2014), which enumerated the skills to be fostered and assessed throughout our curricular programs. These skills were embedded in newly created curricula K-12 from 2014-2020. The profile of a graduate steering committee began by revising and consolidating the 21st century matrix. In June 2022, a K-12 committee convened to write break-out rubrics to correspond to the profile of a graduate capacities matrix. Since 2020, all departments have revised existing units or written new units aligned with the profile of a graduate. In addition to the skills that will be assessed in all courses, beginning with the Class of 2023, all students must successfully complete two specific courses, personal finance and independent project, to earn the profile of a graduate credit. The capacities are embedded in the school curriculum, and according to the 2021 Daniel Hand Student Survey, 63 percent of students are familiar or very familiar with the school's profile of a graduate. The core values and beliefs and the profile of a graduate continue to inform policy, procedure, decisions, and resource allocations.

The curriculum is rich in content, offering stu-dents opportunities to understand important concepts and procedures while simultaneously providing students with opportunities to explore and develop profile of a graduate capacities. These multi-disciplinary outcomes (critical thinking; creative thinking; communication/collaboration; self-direction; and global thinking) are thoughtfully and purposefully embedded throughout the curriculum alongside content informed by state and national standards. The need to test what we value and value what we test drives our assessment system. The assessments in each unit measure content knowledge, content and concept understanding, profile of a graduate capacities, and the ability to apply learning to unique and authentic problems, as clearly delineated in the curricular documents. For example, in the gas laws unit for honors chemistry, students work collaboratively (collective intelligence) to investigate a technological application of the gas laws (analyzing) and present their findings in an appropriate medium of choice (product creation). Social studies students in the world traveler course work collaboratively to design a new World Showcase Pavilion at EPCOT, tapping into the profile of a graduate capacities for analyzing, idea creation, and design.

Standard 2 Principle 2

School's rating in the Self-Reflection report: Developing

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the School

Daniel Hand High School is implementing Principle 2.2. There are curriculum documents in place for all instructional areas that include guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, and skills and integrate the school's vision of the graduate.

The curriculum is designed according to UbD practices wherein curriculum teams identify learning goals, assessment evidence, relevant state and national standards, and a learning plan. All courses have curriculum maps in EduPlanet21 and include units of study with guiding/essential questions, content, and transferable skills in a common format. Curriculum documents also include learning activities and accompanying resources. These maps also identify assessment practices, including discipline-specific, higher-order thinking, and transferable skills.

Standard 5 Principle 1

School's rating in the Self-Reflection report: Developing

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the School

Daniel Hand High School is implementing Principle 5.1. Since the Collaborative Visit, building administration has developed and implemented a system using Google Calendar to schedule shared spaces within our facilities. All pertinent faculty and staff members have access to the Google Calendar for spaces they may need to access and use routinely. After implementing this system, there have been no conflicts for the use of shared spaces.

Additionally, the lighting system for the stage was upgraded. A team of students, club advisors, and faculty members vetted and designed a system for our performance space. That equipment has been installed and was used throughout the school year. Continued training is provided to faculty, club advisors, and students to promote an advanced understanding of this system.

Funds have been allocated to completely replace the HVAC system in the summer of 2025. In the meantime, systems are in place to ensure consistent, safe, and comfortable temperatures and airflow throughout the building. These adjustments include window air conditioning units for highly affected classrooms, funds for as-needed repairs to the existing system, and adjustments to the settings of the current HVAC system to compensate for minimally functioning roof top units.

Commendations

Commendation

The caring, trusting, and respectful relationships between and among the board of education, administrators, teachers, students, and families

Commendation

The collaborative leadership team of building administrators and program coordinators

Commendation

The palpable sense of culture, climate, and collegiality that exists in the building

Commendation

The variety of courses and technology programming in the school that provide authentic real-world experiences and transferable skills

Commendation

The varied and rigorous instructional practices and learning activities

Commendation

The completed curriculum in all content areas that provide assured common experiences for students

Commendation

The autonomy afforded to educators to structure PLCs based on individual department needs

Commendation

The creativity and perseverance of staff in making accommodations that support instruction despite the constraints imposed by the dining and assembly hall

Commendation

The embedded profile of a graduate capacities in curricula, performance-based assessments, and the culture of the school

Additional Recommendations

Recommendation

Ensure the intentionality and implementation of PLC time to promote collaboration and consistency in instructional outcomes

Recommendation

Expand opportunities for student self-reflection and self-assessment in their work and in the profile of a graduate capacities

Recommendation

Leverage common planning time between special education teachers, general education teachers, and support staff to promote high-quality instruction for all students

Recommendation

Develop uniform plans to analyze data from PBAs across all PLCs to identify trends in how well students are mastering profile of a graduate capacities

Recommendation

Use the curriculum review cycle to ensure profile of a graduate capacities remain up-to-date and relevant within all content areas

Recommendation

Develop and implement a long-term plan to address the concerns specific to programming in the dining and assembly hall and the main gymnasium

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

This Initial/Decennial Accreditation Report of the Visiting Team reflects the findings of the school's Summary Report and those of the visiting team. It provides a blueprint for the faculty, administrators, and other officials to use to improve the quality of programs and services for the students in this school. The faculty, school board, and superintendent should be apprised by the building administrators yearly of progress made in aligning with the Standards for Accreditation.

A school's initial/continued Accreditation is based on satisfactory progress implementing the school's improvement/growth plan based on the Priority Areas validated by the visiting team and recommendations identified by the Commission as it monitors the school's progress and changes which occur at the school throughout the decennial cycle.

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

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

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

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES
Commission on Public Schools

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

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

Roster of Team Members

Chair(s)

Chair: Heather O'Brien - Oxford High School

Assistant Chair: Lenny Rutigliano - Masuk High School

Team Members

Jennifer Neal - Bloomfield High School

Damon Pearce - New Britain High School

Matthew Piros - Sage Park Middle School

Raymond Rabuska - Plainfield High School

Amy Rosenberg - Rocky Hill High School

Eric Steinfeld - Bristol Eastern High School