

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

**Commission on Public Schools**



**Commission on Public Schools**

## **Report of the Visiting Team for Haddam-Killingworth High School**

Higganum, CT

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**Carol Luckenbach, Chair  
Victoria Sargeant, Assistant Chair  
Donna Hayward, Principal**

# School and Community Summary

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## School and Community Summary

The small New England towns of Haddam and Killingworth are in the lower Connecticut River Valley of Middlesex County. Killingworth lies 27 miles northeast of New Haven and 33 miles south of Hartford, while Haddam lies 37 miles northeast of New Haven and 27 miles south of Hartford. The neighboring towns include Clinton, Madison, Durham, Middletown, Chester, Deep River, East Hampton, and East Haddam. Killingworth is a town of 6,400 residents spread over 36 square miles. Haddam is a town of 8,300 residents spread over 46 square miles. Each town has a board of selectmen/town meeting form of government and is served by resident state troopers and volunteer fire departments. Regional School District (RSD) 17 comprises the towns of Haddam and Killingworth, and its offices are located at 57 Little City Road in the Higganum section of Haddam. The high school is in an adjacent building.

Killingworth's current population of 6,400 people increased by 8.4 percent between 2000 and 2010 but decreased by 1 percent between 2010 and 2019. The residents are well-educated, with 51 percent holding a bachelor's degree or higher. Killingworth's median family income was \$110,543 in 2019, with the town reporting 3.1 percent of its residents below the poverty level; the state average is 10.0 percent. Haddam's current population of 8,300 people increased by 16.6 percent between 2000 and 2010 but decreased by 2.4 percent between 2010 and 2019. The residents are well-educated, with 46 percent holding a bachelor's degree or higher. Haddam's median family income was \$110,497, with the town reporting 4.0 percent of its residents below the poverty level.

Regional School District 17 is a member of Connecticut's "C" district reference group (DRG) classification of public school districts. Ninety-three percent of students throughout RSD17 are white, 2 percent are Asian, 2 percent are Hispanic or Latino, 1 percent are Black or African American, and 2 percent are of other races.

Regional School District 17 includes students from the towns of Haddam and Killingworth. The district currently comprises five schools on four campuses: two elementary schools (grades Pre-K-3), one intermediate school (grades 4-5), one middle school (grades 6-8) that share a campus, and one high school (grades 9-12). With decreasing enrollment, the configuration of schools was modified into its current status two years ago when one elementary school closed, and the intermediate school was incorporated into the middle school setting. Per-pupil expenditure in 2019-20, the most recent reporting period, was \$20,345, higher than the state average of \$17,748. The Regional School District's overall school budget for the current school year, 2021-2022, is \$42,749,049.19.

Enrollment at Haddam-Killingworth High School (HKHS) remained stable from 2016 to 2019 with an enrollment of 643 for the 2016-2017 school year; 675 for the 2017-2018 school year; and 643 for the 2018-2019 school year. The enrollment has started to decline with 615 students in 2020-2021 and 584 students currently in 2021-2022. The percentage of students with disabilities at the high school is 13.5 percent compared to 16.73 percent for the entire state. The school currently has 48 classroom teachers, 8 special educators, 4 school counselors, 1 full-time social worker, 2 psychologists, 1 library/media specialist, 1 half-time media coordinator, 1 athletic director, 3 main office secretaries, 1 guidance secretary, and 1 full-time nurse. The school also has 9 paraprofessionals with one vacancy and 2 administrators. The absentee rate for full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers at HKHS is an average of 12.7 days due to illness and personal time per year.

HKHS's graduation rate for the 2020-2021 school year was 97.7 percent. The attendance rate for students at HKHS in the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years is 95 percent. The percentage of students attending a four-year college in 2021 was 67.8 percent, while 16.1 percent were enrolled in a two-year community college, 4.4 percent were in a career/ technical training program, 9.1 percent found employment, and 1.1 percent joined the military or joined another public service program.

Several distinctive aspects of the school day include a hybrid schedule in which all classes meet four times per week with two short and two long meeting times. Lunch/activity is a daily extended period during which time students can eat, access teachers for help, attend a club, or simply socialize with friends. A weekly advisory

period provides the venue for counselors to meet with students, for students to attend assemblies, and for the delivery of a variety of academic and social/emotional programs and lessons. In addition to the required course curriculum, students can take advantage of a wide spectrum of advanced classes and programs. One goal has been for all students to graduate having completed a college and/or career experience. Students meet this goal through completion of a dual enrollment course or through an internship experience. As such, HKHS has expanded curricular offerings (AP Human Geography, AP Music Theory, Project Lead the Way, Principles of Computer Science, Virtual High School, and Beginning Spanish Conversation to meet the new state requirement to offer world language to special-education students) and has also added a transition coordinator. HKHS also offers UConn ECE and Middlesex Community College courses for college credit. The school holds an annual school goal that 100 percent of its students will complete a post-secondary-level experience prior to their graduation from HKHS. Hence, each student is encouraged and supported to complete a college-credit-bearing course or perhaps an internship in an area of career interest. The school has experienced high levels of achievement with this goal, as 90-100 percent of the graduates have successfully completed a post-secondary endeavor almost every year.

Haddam-Killingworth High School has many co-curricular activities and recognizes student achievement throughout the year. In addition to the National Honor Society, the school sponsors French, Spanish, and National Art Honor Societies. Also, an annual awards ceremony recognizes students for academic achievements and multiple content-specific competitions provide students an opportunity to demonstrate their talents and skills outside of the classroom. Some of these competitions include the Shoreline Heads of English Department Writers Competition, the Shoreline Math Challenge, the Shoreline Social Studies Award, Scholastic Art Awards, Shoreline Alliance for the Arts Future Choices Competition, and the Seal of Biliteracy.

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

### **HKHS Core Values and Beliefs**

We believe that every member of our community has value. We believe in the power of intellectual curiosity, global responsibility, and personal integrity. We believe in developing the knowledge and skills essential to healthy and productive lives.

### **HKHS Learning Expectations**

In a variety of contexts for a variety of purposes, students will:

1. Demonstrate personal responsibility, character, cultural understanding, and ethical behavior;
2. Communicate clearly and effectively in order to express ideas and connect with others;
3. Investigate, evaluate, and apply information;
4. Work both independently and collaboratively toward a specific outcome;
5. Demonstrate creative, innovative, and reflective thinking.

### **RSD17 Vision of the Graduate:**

*A graduate of the RSD17 school district is a compassionate, critical thinker, who collaborates to solve problems, and is prepared to contribute to improving our world.*

### **Skills**

**Contribute Productively** includes the ability to:

- Take control of one's learning by planning and organizing oneself to complete tasks
- Demonstrate Independence and initiative in doing one's best work
- Collaborate positively on a team project or shared endeavor
- Seek leadership or take a supportive role within a group in a manner that works best for oneself, others and

the outcome

- Think creatively and flexibly to design and develop innovative solutions, strategies, and outcomes

**Think Critically** includes the ability to:

- Inquire and formulate questions to gather information and expand upon ideas
- Research and distill information from reliable resources representative of multiple perspectives
- Evaluate information for credibility, bias, and point of view
- Analyze and interpret information and data to generate solutions to problems
- Reflect upon the accuracy or viability of solutions or conclusions

**Communicate Effectively** includes the ability to:

- Organize thoughts to articulate and justify one's position or perspective with clarity
- Construct, refine, and present arguments supported by evidence
- Actively listen to understand and interpret the ideas and reasoning of others
- Use a variety of verbal, written, or visual methods appropriate for the message and audience

### **Dispositions**

**Maintain a Growth Mindset** involves believing in oneself, having an open-mind, and demonstrating perseverance and resilience. Examples of demonstrating a Growth mindset include:

- Apply sustained effort to understand concepts, acquire skills, and achieve to one's greatest potential
- Reflect upon feedback or mistakes as opportunities to adapt and improve upon learning
- Show determination to accomplish one's goals
- Explore ideas to expand thinking
- Encourage a growth mindset in others

**Demonstrate Respect, Empathy and Kindness** involves caring for and showing compassion for oneself and others. Examples include:

- Seek to understand one another's experiences, circumstances, and perspectives
- Embrace diversity and recognize the value of all persons by promoting equity and inclusivity
- Maintain self-respect and advocate for oneself and others
- Be kind and act to enhance the climate of our schools and community

**Display Character, Courage, and Integrity** involves having confidence in oneself to make sound decisions. Examples include:

- Do the right thing, even when no one is looking
- Take the initiative to provide or seek help for oneself or others
- Stand up for oneself or others when faced with unkind, disrespectful, or discriminatory behavior
- Actively engage in discourse that addresses difficult topics or situations to improve conditions for all

# 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 Self-Reflection, the recommendations of the visiting team, and those identified by the Committee in the follow-up process. Continued Accreditation requires that the school participate in the Accreditation process over the ten-year cycle and that it shows continued progress addressing identified needs.

### Preparation for the Accreditation Visit

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

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

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

### The Process Used by the Visiting Team

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

Each conclusion in the report was agreed to by visiting team consensus. Sources of evidence for each conclusion drawn by the visiting team are included in each report section. The report contains commendations and recommendations that, in the visiting team's judgment, will be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning and implement its plan for growth and improvement. The report also includes an analysis

of the conceptual understanding, commitment, competency, and capacity (4Cs) - a framework used to evaluate the school's ability for continuous growth and improvement as a learning organization.

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

# Foundational Element 1.1a - Learning Culture

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## Foundational Element 1.1a

The school community provides a safe environment. All stakeholders report that they feel safe within the school. All entrances to the school are locked; access during the school day is through the main entrance, with a security guard monitoring the entrance. Pandemic procedures have limited building access even more, with only required visitors allowed into the building. Panic buttons and security cameras are available in many areas of the school. A number of additional security cameras have been added since the Collaborative Conference Visit, including cameras in the renovated field house and the auditorium. Main office secretaries are now able to unlock the single point of entry from their desks. Vape detectors that detect tobacco smoke and vapors, THC vapors, and excessively loud noise have been installed in four student bathrooms. The emergency alert system in the field house and bridge hallways has been enhanced; stairwells and bathrooms are still in need of enhanced security. Fully developed emergency procedures are published and distributed, and lockdown and fire drills are held regularly and monitored by the fire marshal.

### Rating

Meets the Standard

# Foundational Element 1.2a - Learning Culture

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## Foundational Element 1.2a

The school has a written document describing its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate. A written document describing the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and learning expectations was previously developed by the administration, faculty, and students, along with a board of education member. This document guides the school's mission. During the winter of 2021, the board of education adopted the Regional School District 17 Vision of the Graduate. This document was created with input from all stakeholders and is being implemented K-12. Implementation is in the beginning stages.

### Rating

Meets the Standard

# Foundational Element 2.2a - Student Learning

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## Foundational Element 2.2a

There is a written curriculum in a consistent format for most courses in most departments. A common template that includes units of study with guiding/essential questions, content and skills, instructional strategies, and assessment practices was adopted in 2019 and has been implemented as departments complete curriculum revisions. Additional elements of the written curriculum vary from department to department. The curriculum is stored in a shared Google Drive that is accessible to all faculty and staff. All departments continue to update and revise the curriculum according to an established curriculum revision cycle in collaboration with the two district curriculum coordinators, who have been hired since the Collaborative Conference Visit.

### Rating

Meets the Standard

# Foundational Element 3.1a - Professional Practices

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## Foundational Element 3.1a

The school has a current school improvement/growth plan. The school's Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) specifies program and instructional performance goals based on an analysis of data and stakeholder feedback. The school's goals are tied to the district's vision of the graduate as well as to the school's core values and beliefs about learning and to district-established goals.

### Rating

Meets the Standard

# Foundational Elements 4.1a - Learning Support

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## Foundational Elements 4.1a

The school has a wide range of intervention strategies designed to support the needs of all students. The student assistance team (STAT) and Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) team have clarified and streamlined their processes to ensure that referrals are dealt with in a timely manner. Additional supports have been put in place to address the significant increase in social and emotional issues caused by the ongoing pandemic. These supports include:

- contracting with Effective School Solutions (ESS) to bring two social workers/case managers into the building to support the most vulnerable students
- implementing a school-wide social-emotional learning curriculum, School Connect, through the advisory program
- becoming a pilot district for the State of Connecticut to utilize Aperture software, which acts as a tiered social-emotional screening process for all students
- hiring a one-year, full-time staff member to support students in a small group setting who struggle with mathematics
- hiring a one-year, full-time social worker to provide support for students with 504 plans, IEPs, and those in the general population

## Rating

Meets the Standard

# Foundational Element 5.1a - Learning Resources

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## Foundational Element 5.1a

The community and district provide school buildings and facilities that somewhat support the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services. The school buildings and facilities are clean, and maintenance is performed according to a regular schedule. However, some maintenance issues continue, such as broken desks that have been removed but not replaced, as well as multiple occurrences of a lack of potable water. Multiple classrooms, including counseling offices, are separated by thin walls that allow people in adjoining classrooms to hear what is occurring. This is distracting and sometimes violates confidentiality. Gas lines to the technology education and science departments were disconnected during a renovation of the boiler and have never been reconnected, resulting in several units of study that can no longer be taught. While the field house underwent a substantial renovation, airflow issues in the field house have not been addressed for budgetary reasons. The board of education contracted with Tecton Architects to conduct an Educational Facilities Assessment in order to identify further needs for facilities improvements; the extensive report identifies myriad facilities issues that need to be addressed, some of which might be included in the operating budget but some of which will require bonding to complete. The building is in compliance with federal and state laws and local fire, health and safety regulations, but is not fully ADA compliant, despite some recent updates; the girls' locker room is not Title IX compliant.

## Rating

Does Not Meet the Standard

# Foundational Elements Ratings

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## 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                                    | Does Not Meet                             | 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                                     | Does Not Meet             | Does Not Meet              |

# Priority Area 1

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## Priority Area

Haddam-Killingworth High School will create a vision of the graduate with all stakeholders to provide the main direction and focus for the school.

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

## Action, Impact, and Growth

### Action

At the time of the collaborative conference visit, Haddam-Killingworth High school had a fully developed statement of core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. School-wide rubrics had been developed and implemented. However, Haddam-Killingworth did not yet have a vision of the graduate. A committee composed of key stakeholders, including community members, town officials, two board of education members, parents, administrators, and educators, developed the vision of the graduate. This vision of the graduate was approved by the faculty, and during the winter of 2021, the board of education adopted the Regional School District 17 Vision of the Graduate. The vision of the graduate states that a graduate of the district is a compassionate critical thinker, who collaborates to solve problems and is prepared to contribute to improving our world. Embodying the vision is a set of skills and dispositions that describe in more detail the expectations for students. The school hopes that its students and eventual graduates will become proficient in these six areas.

The school has taken a variety of steps to implement this vision of the graduate within the school. In the fall of 2021, the school year opened with professional development for educators that introduced and educated the staff on the vision of the graduate. Illustrations depicting a representation of the vision of the graduate as well as the coinciding skills and dispositions are displayed in every classroom and throughout the building. The members of Haddam-Killingworth High School's Class of 2023 are engaged in compiling examples of their execution of the vision's skills and dispositions into a digital portfolio representing their four years of work. The digital portfolio will be used to create a presentation focused on how the work displays a growth mindset. Successful completion of the digital portfolio and the presentation will result in the awarding of one credit toward graduation as well as fulfillment of the state of Connecticut's graduation requirement for a capstone project. The Class of 2023 will be the first group to complete and showcase this portfolio. A rubric for evaluating the portfolio is still in development. In the meantime, students are required to upload material that has been assessed using the current school-wide rubrics.

Students are compiling educational artifacts in their advisory classes with the assistance of their advisory teachers. There have been some advisory lessons on the vision of the graduate to assist students as they compile this evidence of growth and learning. Advisory teachers also monitor the status of students' portfolio creation and will relay concerns to the appropriate school counselor. Parents have also been notified of this culminating project and graduation requirement.

Items that classify as portfolio-worthy are products from various cornerstone assessments across all disciplines. Currently, these assessments are evaluated using school-wide rubrics aligned with the school's previously adopted learning expectations. Although similar, the school's learning expectations are not identical to the vision of the graduate.

### Impact

The results of these actions steps can be seen in classrooms around the building and during advisory, which meets each week. Senior students are now required to prepare and present a portfolio that demonstrates they have met the learning expectations set by Haddam-Killingworth, with the Class of 2023 slated to be the first group to participate. Students and teachers have been preparing for this culminating project during advisory as

well as throughout their daily classes.

The implementation of the vision of the graduate, along with the planned capstone presentation, has certainly had an impact on Haddam-Killingworth's school community. Some faculty members remain uncertain about the process and what it would look like but also agree that it is a great way for students to live the vision of the graduate and see how far they have come as learners. Some teachers feel that the vision of the graduate and continued use of the school-wide rubric feel disjointed. Some students feel that the process is currently somewhat confusing but have confidence that their advisory teachers will guide them in showcasing themselves as learners.

## **Growth**

The school community has developed a vision of the graduate as well as a culminating project showcasing student work and growth over the course of their time at Haddam-Killingworth High School. The Class of 2023 is the first class that has begun creating this portfolio. The vision of the graduate is not fully implemented. Curriculum documents have appended the vision of the graduate but have not integrated the vision into learning outcomes, activities, and assessments. Learning expectation rubrics have not yet been revised to align with the vision of the graduate.

## **Recommended Next Steps**

- Align the school's current learning expectations and rubrics with the vision of the graduate
- Develop and implement a rubric for the digital portfolio based on the vision of the graduate
- Develop and implement a process for ongoing reflection on a growth mindset that leads to and is incorporated in the culminating assessment in the senior portfolio presentation

## **Sources of Evidence**

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

# Priority Area 2

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## Priority Area

Haddam-Killingworth High School will create a common curriculum template and migrate all curricula to this new template.

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

## Action, Impact, and Growth

### Summary of Actions

Curriculum documents are now created and stored in a common location and include a common cover page. The newly formed vision of the graduate appears on the cover page of almost all curriculum documents. All curriculum documents are stored in a common Google Drive for all teachers and staff members to access at any time. A common template is available for all departments; however, not all courses have completed the transition to the new template. All curriculum documents include essential questions, student skills and knowledge, and standards addressed within the course. There are some inconsistencies in the order of items found in the template. English currently has pacing guides as separate documents, whereas science has pacing guides at the beginning of the unit curriculum, and math has pacing guide hyperlinks within its curriculum. Math and science have hyperlinks embedded into their curriculum for assessments, worksheets, and activities, whereas English has a list of possible assessments but does not include the actual assessments.

Two curriculum coordinators, hired in 2020, oversee the revision of the curriculum in all courses. A newly formed curriculum revision plan accounts for all courses and provides a timeline for when each course offered will be evaluated, revised, and implemented. Most courses are revised on a five-year cycle, with Advanced Placement courses rewritten on an annual basis based on College Board requirements. Other courses, such as Modern Novel, are scheduled for revision every two years to keep content current.

Teachers have four common planning times per week to assess student work and discuss the curriculum. This time built into the school day allows for timely revisions to take place within the curriculum. A portion of this time is used to discuss various assessments, using newly implemented data team sheets. These data team sheets, created in 2021, allow a group of teachers to input their data for a shared assignment into a spreadsheet to see the percentages of students who are proficient (scoring 80-100), approaching proficiency (60-79), and not proficient (0-59). Using these data team sheets, teachers can discuss obstacles and strategies, and revisions and additions of worksheets, activities, and assessments can be made immediately. Some departments have curriculum revision ongoing throughout the school year via these data team groupings, while others take part in curriculum review in the spring to see what was actually covered. Revision also occurs through summer curriculum work.

Previously designed school-wide rubrics are used to assess school-wide learning expectations using cornerstone projects that will be integrated into the senior portfolio for the first time in 2023. These school-wide rubrics assess some but not all aspects of the vision of the graduate. Student work shows that an instructional priority has been placed on developing a growth mindset, but a formalized rubric for this has not yet been produced.

### Summary of Impact

With online, editable documents, the curriculum is now accessible to all personnel and can be used immediately by new teachers and staff. This helps to streamline expectations and keep new teachers on pace with veteran teachers. The online curriculum documents also allow all teachers teaching the same course to stay on pace with one another, providing consistency from class to class. Students appreciate the consistency between classes, as this allows them to work together and collaborate on difficult topics even if they are not enrolled in the same section. Teachers do not teach the same courses year after year and now have the ability to access curriculum for courses they have not recently taught. Living curriculum documents allow teachers to compare strategies,

provide guidance to those who may be a few days behind, or give additional assessment opportunities to students. Updated curriculum documents also allow for collaboration between teachers to provide a larger number of ideas for assessments and possible texts or projects.

The vision of the graduate is printed within each curriculum document, although how it is formally taught and assessed is not yet established. Students are informally assessed on some aspects of the vision of the graduate through collaborative work, verbal and written communication, analysis of data, and self-reflection in a variety of courses. However, a formal process has not yet been established. The school-wide rubrics are present in all courses and provide guidance for students on where they stand in meeting the learning expectations set by the school. The school-wide rubrics do not cover all aspects of the vision of the graduate. Multiple rubrics may cover the same aspect of the vision of the graduate, whereas other aspects have no associated rubric.

## **Summary of Growth**

A curriculum revision plan is in place with concrete dates established for the revision of all courses that are offered at the high school. All curriculum documents are found in a common location, and all teachers have access to them. Rubrics are found in all departments for specific assignments and for the learning expectations that the school has deemed important. The curriculum leads to many community events, including TV production students producing a holiday show that raised thousands of dollars; students participating in a food show for channel 8; art shows; and chorus performances at state and regional levels. Teachers are actively assessing curriculum implementation using data team sheets during their common planning time. A curriculum coordinator is working with the science department in an effort to evaluate the current core courses and possibly change the course sequence and electives offered, aligning with the Next Generation Science Standards. The history department is working with a curriculum coordinator to overhaul the entire course sequence and revamp the curriculum offered.

A common curriculum template is available but needs to be fully implemented in all content areas. How the vision of the graduate will be taught and assessed within all disciplines should be explicitly spelled out for new and veteran teachers and for students.

## **Recommended Next Steps**

- Integrate the vision of the graduate into unit and lesson learning outcomes, classroom instruction, and assessment
- Complete and implement specific assessments for all aspects of the vision of the graduate
- Implement an ongoing curriculum revision cycle that includes all subject areas
- Create links within curriculum documents to assessments, activities, and potential formative assessments to ensure live, editable curriculum documents
- Refine the data team process to support ongoing curriculum changes during the school year

## **Sources of Evidence**

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

# Priority Area 3

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## Priority Area

Haddam-Killingworth High School will improve the school site and plant to support the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services and to ensure access to all areas of the building by all stakeholders through full ADA compliance.

(5.1a - The community and district provide school buildings and facilities that support the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services.)

## Action, Impact, and Growth

### Action

Haddam Killingworth High School is working on ensuring that the school building and facilities support the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services. The school's continuous improvement plan highlights the priority of collaborating with the facilities department to support needed updates and improvements to the physical plant that support delivery of high quality curriculum, programs, and services.

The dedicated custodial and maintenance staff members follow daily, weekly, monthly and yearly maintenance schedules to ensure that the environment is conducive to learning, is safe, and is clean. The maintenance request system is now digital and can be accessed through the district website to report maintenance needs. The boiler plant has been upgraded and is in good working order.

A number of actions have been taken to address facility needs. The field house has been completely renovated, including replacement of the flooring, windows, and sound system; repair of the roof; repainting of surfaces; refreshing of bleachers; the addition of dividers to section the gym; and replacement of some field house equipment. An additional large capital improvement project was the renovation of the auditorium. The auditorium hosts a new raised access walk that connects the main level with the stage and has a wheelchair lift to assist individuals with disabilities. The renovation also includes new seating, flooring, paint, and stage curtains. Security improvements throughout the building include the addition of extra security cameras throughout the campus to limit the number of blind spots. Panic buttons and single entry unlock buttons are in place to assist with safety and security needs. A security staff member monitors the building throughout the day. Emergency procedures are in place and tested with monthly drills. The building complies with all local health and safety codes.

The school is working on ensuring that the facilities are in line with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance protocol. Drinking fountains and bottle filler stations have been added and modified to meet accessibility standards. Expansion of bathroom stalls in some bathroom facilities and modifications to select toilet partitions have been completed for ADA compliance. The office's main entry has undergone necessary improvements to become ADA compliant.

The board of education and staff acknowledge a number of facility attributes in need of attention due to the age of the building. The board has identified capital improvements in the 2022-2023 budget that include abatement and replacement of the cafeteria floor, installation of a fire alarm system, and repair of windows. To ensure that budgetary allotments are in the students' best interest, the board hired Tecton Architects to complete an Educational Facility Assessment to support data-driven decisions for future improvements.

### Impact

The actions taken to enhance and improve the facilities directly affect the school's students. The buildings, facilities, and equipment support some of the educational programs but not all. Regular building maintenance supports the functioning of the facilities in some areas. According to the NEASC survey, 54 percent of teachers report that the school is clean and well maintained, and 57 percent of teachers find that the building and grounds support student learning. Across the school, there is a multitude of maintenance concerns, including rodent

droppings; equipment that is original to the building; deterioration of desks, tables, chairs and benches; leaky sinks in classrooms; bathroom facilities that are unusable; broken shades; occasional leaks from the roof and windows; and a frequent lack of potable water. A consistent concern is the sound attenuation caused by thin and or temporary walls; this frequently interferes with student privacy issues and causes distraction in the learning environment. The installation of the new boiler resulted in gas lines being cut without replacement in the science and technical education classrooms, affecting multiple classes. The culinary arts program is limited because of equipment that no longer functions as designed. The school's facility issues are caused by the aging infrastructure rather than by human capacity.

The field house renovation allows the school to host school and shoreline athletic events. The new building design and utilization of partitions and retractable bleachers allow for multiple sports to use the facilities concurrently. Equipment improvements enhance the athletic playingfields and have the potential to lead to increased performance. Additionally, the improvements made to the field house ensure an equitable, inclusive environment that enables all students to access the bleachers, field events, and the gym. Field house renovations assist in the ability to avoid distractions in the learning environment. The field house and grounds improvements provide students with the ability and opportunity to practice and participate in twenty varsity sports and assists in the facilitation of the wellness curriculum. An uncompleted action step is the improvement of the airflow within the field house.

The renovations to the auditorium have provided a multipurpose space. Providing a raised walkway allows all students to participate in the numerous functions held in the auditorium. This addition not only increases equity but also ensures the safety of students in need of accommodations. The new seating, flooring, paint, and stage curtains assist in the establishment of an aesthetically pleasing space that allows the curriculum and students to flourish.

Security additions ensure that students and staff are safe. Additional cameras have decreased the number of blind spots, enabling adults and professionals to assist students in need and serving as measures to prevent risks to security. The Educational Facility Assessment indicates that the security cameras cover the entire perimeter of the building along with the entrances and are in good condition. Panic buttons initiate building-wide lockdown procedures, protecting the population within the school building in a timely manner. Secretaries have localized control of the main office entry point, allowing for improved guest identification and a better-secured entryway. Regular emergency procedures assist in the overall safety of the school. According to the NEASC survey, 79 percent of students report that they know what to do in the event of an emergency.

In some areas, ADA compliance measures have ensured equity, accessibility, and access for all students, staff, and visitors to the school. The school has targeted areas to allow all students to have access to necessities. Some bathrooms and entryways are ADA compliant. An additional impact of the work has ensured that the main office is accessible and within compliance. The school community is considering ways to ensure full compliance with ADA school regulations to protect individuals with disabilities and allow for access to educational opportunities and ease of movement at entry and exit points as well as within the building. The library/media center includes three levels with multiple staircases, and there is no elevator, making access to all levels an issue for anyone with mobility issues. Ramps throughout the building are not readily usable by persons with disabilities because of surface level changes and carpeting. Despite some improvements, the building is not fully ADA compliant; most issues are due to the age of the building and lack of funding. Neither the field house nor the pool locker rooms comply with Title IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The board's acknowledgment of the aging infrastructure and contracting with Tecton Architects to perform an Educational Facility Assessment shows the school community's commitment to future capital improvements to the facilities. The board is developing a strategic action plan, with building and facilities as the fourth component of the plan. Tecton Architects will make recommendations to the board that support either the building of a new high school, renovation of the current building "as new," or making minor fixes to the current building. Board of education members have developed a detailed and comprehensive report that is being reviewed by the entire board. The full board, in conjunction with the superintendent of schools, will render a decision by the end of the year concerning how to proceed with capital improvements.

## **Growth**

Extensive measures are in place to determine progress toward completion of Priority Area 3. School and NEASC surveys from students, staff, and parents provide reflection on this Priority Area. Frequent classroom observations and facility tours provide insight into issues in interior classrooms. Interviews with teachers assist in measuring the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services in relation to the school site and plant support. State and local fire, health, and safety regulations determine safety progress. ADA compliance and Title IX measures are used to evaluate and or determine discriminatory actions. The Educational Facilities Assessment provides detailed information regarding the facilities and building infrastructure. Staff members have made improvements within their capacity to provide facilities and a school building that supports this Priority Area; however, the building remains non-compliant in many areas.

The Educational Facilities Assessment considers the high school building to be in poor condition. Immediate interior needs include full HVAC ventilation and air conditioning renovation, hazardous material abatement, and replacement of electrical distribution. The report communicates that the sprawling layout is very inefficient for delivery of a high school curriculum. ADA compliance issues include a single elevator, limited access points, the inability to access all multipurpose spaces, and some door hardware that is not ADA compliant. The main locker rooms and pool locker rooms do not meet Title IX requirements. The facilities assessment, in conjunction with classroom visits, showcase that the sound attenuation between spaces is very poor due to thin temporary walls that were part of the original building design. The sound attenuation remains an area of concern for both students and staff.

## **Recommended Next Steps**

Ensure ADA and Title IX compliance:

- Replace existing hardware with ADA-compliant hardware
- Provide multiple entry and exit points that are ADA compliant
- Upgrade school ramps to allow access to all areas of the building
- Reconstruct locker room facilities to ensure Title IX compliance

Support the delivery of the curriculum:

- Replace thin and temporary walls to improve sound attenuation
- Replace broken desks, chairs, tables, benches, and equipment that pose safety concerns
- Provide functioning gas lines to science and technology education rooms

Improve air quality:

- Improve air quality in field house and pool areas
- Provide new energy-efficient HVAC units for ventilation and air conditioning

## **Sources of Evidence**

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

# Priority Area 4

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## Priority Area

Haddam-Killingworth High School will improve its technology infrastructure and access to hardware to ensure that teachers and students have reliable, stable internet and Wi-Fi connections and easy access to computers while optimizing technology-based lessons and the use of Google Suite and Google Classroom.

(2.9 - Learners use technology across all curricular areas to support, enhance, and demonstrate their learning.)

## Action, Impact, and Growth

### Action

Recent technology initiatives have focused on improving student access to technology. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the district allocated unspent funds from the 2019-2020 budget to implement a 1:1 Chromebook initiative for all students. Simultaneously, the district standardized the Google Suite as the instructional learning platform to facilitate teaching and learning.

In addition, the basic technology infrastructure in the school has been improved. Classrooms now have Wi-Fi access which allows students to use their Chromebooks in class. Most recently, the installation of wireless access points has expanded beyond the walls of the school. An outdoor router has been purchased and installed to provide internet access to the athletic fields and community access outside the building.

Haddam-Killingworth High School has begun investing in new software and applications to improve teaching and learning. For example, Aperture software is being used to screen all students for their social and emotional well-being; School Connect, an online social and emotional learning curriculum, is being implemented in advisory; and a grade transfer application allows teachers to transfer grades from Google Classroom to PowerSchool.

### Impact

Over the past three years, every student has been provided with a district-issued device and a common program for the delivery of instructional content, collection of assignments, and communication with students and families. Students and teachers have become proficient in collaborating on and accessing assignments in a virtual environment. Google Classroom remains useful for students who must miss school due to quarantine or other issues. Students find that using Google Classroom improves their ability to stay organized with assignments and to communicate with their teachers and peers. Thus, the improvements made in the area of technology allowed for the successful navigation of a hybrid learning model during the 2020-2021 school year. There are future plans to implement a digital portfolio with students to demonstrate their growth from freshman to senior year as part of the assessment of the vision of the graduate. The staff, administration, and board of education are committed to advancing technology.

While the 1:1 device program and improvements to the technology infrastructure have had a significant impact, classroom observations reveal few innovative uses of technology software and applications, with technology currently being used primarily as a productivity tool rather than as an enhancement to student learning.

### Growth

Growth in the area of technology is being measured in various ways. The school distributes a technology survey to teachers each spring to gather information on what is working well and what improvements are needed. The library/media specialist and curriculum coordinators summarize the survey results, gather additional input from students, and communicate the findings to staff. These results are shared with administrators for budgeting considerations.

The number of instructional programs being used in certain departments has increased. Some recently adopted applications include Kami, DESMOS, NewsELA, Ed Puzzle, and Jamboard. Funding, however, has not increased, creating the need for decisions to be made within departments to allocate existing funds toward technology at the expense of other items needed to support curriculum and instruction. In addition, limited funding for textbook replacement has hindered the expansion of technology use within the classroom, as new textbooks and support material often include digital resources.

Outdated Smartboards have begun to be replaced with a more economical brand called View Boards. Teachers have concerns regarding the commitment to fund the continued replacement of outdated equipment. Some teachers feel that growth in the creative uses of instructional technology has been impeded by outdated hardware.

Professional development time currently includes supporting teachers in the training and use of the new technology. This has mostly been provided by the library/media specialist and curriculum coordinators. Faculty members are concerned that the planned elimination of the library coordinator position for the 2022-2023 school year would inhibit the library/media specialist's ability to assist with the implementation of instructional programs in classrooms.

## **Recommended Next Steps**

- Allocate sufficient funds within the budget to support and expand infrastructure
- Establish a multi-year plan as part of the budget process to refresh aging student Chromebooks and other technology devices, such as iPads, Smartboards, and teacher devices, and to fund innovative uses of instructional technology across the curriculum
- Include the use of instructional technology in the curriculum within the curriculum review process
- Ensure that new technology needs are determined by the requirements of the vision of the graduate
- Identify and incorporate additional technology resources, outside of Google Suite, into classroom instruction in order to support, enhance, and demonstrate student learning
- Provide professional development in the innovative uses of instructional technology to support student learning

## **Sources of Evidence**

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

# Part 3 - Reflection on Student Learning

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## Reflection on Student Learning

Instructional practices are designed to meet the learning needs of each student. Teachers strategically differentiate, individualize, and personalize learning based on students' learning needs. Lessons often include a variety of differentiation strategies, including purposeful groupings, differentiated reading levels, accommodated assessments, and a variety of differentiated performance assessments. Visual and verbal models and instruction are provided across multiple classrooms to help learners. For example, in geometry class, students take turns selecting vocabulary cards, drawing visual representations of the terms, then sharing with their group. In French class, the teacher utilizes direct instruction fully in the French language to deliver instruction and reminds students to write the English word in the margin if it helps them as an instructional strategy. Additionally, students are often given the opportunity to work through problems themselves or with partners, with the teacher as the facilitator of learning. In English class, students are provided with an illustration on the board in order to support their developing their own character arguments. Students develop their arguments with a partner while the teacher supports them through the use of guiding questions, information, and vocabulary. Throughout multiple classrooms, teachers utilize content-specific vocabulary and guiding questions with individual students to differentiate and provide them with additional support, allowing them to gain a deeper understanding of the curriculum. Should a student still continue to struggle, the school has implemented a tiered intervention model to assist struggling learners in acquiring the necessary skills for achievement. During the intervention process, teachers and support staff discuss students' behavior and academics and develop a multistep plan to provide additional support and instructional strategies for each student as needed. Teachers often use formative assessments to gauge student understanding, collect instant feedback, and make immediate adjustments to instruction. For example, teachers consistently check for understanding using various techniques. In several classes, teachers adjust their instruction based on student responses to posed questions and identify any misconceptions before moving on. If needed, teachers are willing to stop their lesson and review concepts with the whole class before continuing the lesson. Additionally, teachers offer support outside of the classroom and provide resources that detail various ways to confirm understanding. Other teachers use purposeful groupings and support from peers to help struggling students complete classwork and keep all students engaged. During science class, the teacher purposefully groups students so that a strong student is with a peer who may need extra support. This strategic grouping is seen throughout a multitude of classrooms.

Students are active learners who often have opportunities to lead their own learning. Teachers across all departments encourage students to be active learners. Within the classroom, many courses incorporate project-based learning, allowing students to apply knowledge to authentic tasks. In math, students engage in a hands-on, inquiry-based activity in which they are asked to draw circles and identify key aspects of the drawing. Students are required to activate prior knowledge of circles to discover their new learning. In Civil Engineering and Architecture, students work with a partner to research an architectural style and build a model representation. During science classes, students are actively engaged in an activity on eye muscles which allows them to develop their own knowledge as well as engage in discourse and reflection within their groups. Additionally, students frequently participate in science labs to further their understanding of various concepts. In multiple classes, students read about the concepts in the text on their own and then become the teachers of the concept to show their understanding and learning, often sharing out within their groups or with the entire class. Students have a number of avenues for creative expression and student choice as a result of diverse learning opportunities. For example, in art classes, students choose and design their own projects based on skills, material usage, and level of difficulty. Students create their own path through the exploration of the arts, which leads them into new directions. In Creative Writing, students choose the action verb they want to use to explain the dialogue that they are writing and share this individually or with a partner. In health class, students self-select an article to read about healthy eating and decide on the three most important takeaways. Students select their level of intensity and activity in physical education classes. In English class, students choose their own partners and character to report on. They work together to identify defining qualities of their selected character and use evidence from the text to support their choices. Students in history classes decide on Athens or Sparta as the preferable city-state and then develop and support their own thesis. Students frequently engage in discourse and reflection about their learning in multiple classrooms. In history class, students research information using guiding

questions and report their findings to the class. Students then engage in discourse and reflect on all findings within their assigned groups. In language courses, students engage in conversation using vocabulary terms and appropriate sentence structure. Language teachers engage with students as they circulate the classroom, often extending the conversations. In mathematics classrooms, students engage in discourse with each other, discussing and reviewing problem-solving techniques.

Learners regularly engage in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills. Teachers help students develop high order thinking skills through a combination of lessons, assignments, and assessments. Students use inquiry processes and problem-solving strategies across the curricula. During language classes, students formulate their own sentences independently to respond to the prompted activity. Discourse between students and the teacher requires students to think critically before responding in the appropriate language. Furthermore, teachers challenge students in class by speaking fluently in the language in order for students to develop a full understanding of the language and their own thinking skills. In multiple classes, students are asked to identify key information and concepts from a passage or packet they have been provided. In math, students analyze graphs and equations independently and in groups in order to draw conclusions about the given problem. History and English classes require students to use multiple sources of evidence to support their points of view. Teachers deliberately design learning and assessment experiences that are challenging and require students to exercise a full range of thinking skills. The Film Studies course requires students to analyze a film to evaluate techniques and identify transferable skills to produce their own film. Biology students are asked to determine the recessive and dominant traits of grandparents based on the phenotype expressed in a grandchild. Students analyze, problem-solve, and rely on high order thinking skills to work backward to make a determination. Students in the Project Lead the Way engineering program complete a cable car activity, structural efficiency assignment, and fling machine challenge, all of which require students to demonstrate understanding of concepts, develop step-by-step solutions, and construct a final product.

Learners demonstrate their learning through a variety of assessment strategies that inform classroom instruction and curriculum. Teachers use a variety of assessments, such as portfolios, projects, presentations, performance tasks, quizzes, tests, and essays. Teachers in multiple classes pause instruction periodically to check for understanding and ask follow up questions to clarify misconceptions. Additionally, teachers will move from independent work to whole group instruction after noticing multiple students struggling with the same vocabulary or concept. In chemistry class, the teacher asks students to determine the amount of energy in a specific substance and reteaches the needed elements to assist in the learning process. Common school-wide rubrics are used by all departments, with many departments identifying which rubrics correspond to each assessment. In history and other departments, students are provided with the rubrics ahead of time so that they are aware of the criteria for success. Additionally, students utilize peer feedback worksheets and rubrics to demonstrate their learning. These rubrics allow opportunities for students to self-assess, peer assess, and receive feedback from teachers. Teachers frequently and regularly check for understanding in ways that engage every learner's thinking about the concept, skills, or information being learned. Teachers formally assess students using direct questioning in science classes and ask students to demonstrate their knowledge of vocabulary. In world language classes, teachers support students by providing correct pronunciation of vocabulary as needed when students are struggling to pronounce the words correctly. In math class, the teacher circulates around the room, noticing if students are able to accurately draw a visual representation of the mathematical term. When the students struggle, the teacher asks follow up and guiding questions to support the students. These formal and informal assessments are used to check for understanding, allow for immediate clarification of material, expose the need for remediation, and measure student progress toward unit goals. Several departments use common summative assessments to show that all students acquire the same knowledge and skills in their classes.

Learners have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning, receive corrective feedback, and use this feedback in meaningful ways to support their learning. Learners are provided with multiple and varied opportunities over time to demonstrate their learning. Students demonstrate their understanding of mathematical vocabulary and concepts by applying prior knowledge to solve the problem and complete the task of creating and identifying key aspects of circles in math classes. Students also draw visual representations of theorems to demonstrate their knowledge. Across multiple classes, students are asked to identify key takeaways from the daily lesson. In history class, students demonstrate their learning by underlining parts of the paragraph they find important and making notes in the margin to define words. Teachers and peers give consistent, systematic, specific, and timely corrective feedback to guide next steps in learning. Traditional written and oral feedback by teachers is common practice. In both Civil Engineering and Architecture and Advanced Woodworking, students complete hands-on projects that are evaluated using both school-wide rubrics and a specific technology

education rubric. Additionally, students work closely with partners in history class to review each other's essay and score it using the school-wide rubrics. Students provide each other with constructive feedback and communicate areas in need of improvement. Students use this peer feedback to revise and resubmit their essays. Students also have opportunities in many classes to complete quiz and test corrections to gain a better understanding of the knowledge they may have missed. In band, the teacher individualizes and personalizes instruction based on student need and gives students multiple opportunities to correct and reassess. Teachers use direct questioning techniques and prompting to provide corrective feedback in creative writing and physics classes, a strategy that is used in multiple courses across multiple content areas.

Learners occasionally use technology across all curricular areas to support, enhance, and demonstrate their learning. The addition of 1:1 Chromebooks allows greater access to students; teachers have begun to embed technology into their curriculum and instruction, mainly incorporating Google Suite. Learners utilize their Chromebooks to look up key terms, access previous worksheets to activate prior knowledge, collaborate on assignments, and write essays. Smartboards are used in classes as projectors to display worksheets or activity directions; however, they are rarely used interactively to enhance the learning of the students. Calculators and whiteboards are used in math classes to assist students with the completion of solving math problems. In Spanish class, students use their cell phones to record themselves speaking Spanish for a specific amount of time. Some teachers utilize Screencastify to record themselves and share it on their Google classrooms for students to view. Students use technology to construct knowledge, create, and problem-solve. For example, in history class, students work independently and collaboratively on their Chromebooks to research information on the battles that took place in Greece and report on how Greece emerged from these battles. In Civil Engineering and Architecture, students complete a unit of study related to the software program Autodesk Revit. Students apply the software to create a readable blueprint. Students in French class utilize Google Meet and classroom technology to bring in a French poet who teaches the class how to write poetry in French while broadening their global perspectives. Some teachers use technology to further enhance student learning via collaborative characteristics found in Google Docs, Google Sheets, and NewsELA. While examples of innovative technology can be seen in some classrooms, the majority of teachers use little technology beyond the Google Suite and school-issued Chromebooks to enhance student learning.

# Part 4 - Capacity for Continuous Growth as a Learning Organization

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## Conceptual Understanding

While the school's articulated beliefs about learning have been embedded in the school culture for a number of years, the faculty recently engaged in an exercise that developed a consensus on what effective learning looks like. The four principles of effective learning identified by the faculty include: goal-oriented lessons; quality assessments; instructional activities aligned to the assessments; and student engagement and connection in a safe learning environment.

Teachers and administrators demonstrate conceptual understanding of the four Priority Areas for Growth. The newly adopted vision of the graduate was the subject of professional development at the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year. Teachers are able to identify the connections between the vision of the graduate and the school's previously defined learning expectations but have not yet fully accepted the need to assess student progress toward the vision of the graduate. Teachers are in the process of expanding the school's cornerstone assessments to include concepts not currently assessed via the current school-wide rubrics.

The faculty has a conceptual understanding of the need for a common curriculum template and clear documentation of the school's curriculum. Departments collaborate on curriculum during common planning time and during paid summer curriculum writing time. The faculty needs to expand its conceptual understanding of the need to integrate the use of instructional technology within teaching and learning. While the pandemic accelerated the school's adoption of a 1:1 Chromebook program and the improvement of the technology infrastructure, innovative uses of technology to enhance student learning are not yet evident in many classrooms.

The key concepts in the vision of the graduate have been extensively defined. The vision of the graduate includes six key concepts, and each concept is broken down into multiple bullet points that further elaborate on the concept. While the vision of the graduate seems complicated to students, efforts by classroom teachers and in advisory classes are geared toward helping them understand the multiple components.

Next steps to ensure that the school's conceptual understanding fully supports the school's development as a learning organization include alignment of the vision of the graduate with the school-wide rubrics to further assist students in developing their conceptual understanding of what is expected of them; professional development on innovative uses of technology to support and enhance student learning; alignment of the school's curriculum with the vision of the graduate.

## Commitment

The school community is fully committed to the school's understanding of effective learning, the Priority Areas, and the vision of the graduate. The vision of the graduate was developed during the pandemic and is in the beginning phases of implementation during the 2021-2022 school year. However, the school fully embraced the previous learning expectations and accompanying school-wide rubrics and has a robust system in place for assessing the learning expectations. Cornerstone assessments in every department are used to show student progress on the learning expectations. Because the vision of the graduate is derived from and expands on those learning expectations, the transition to assessing and reporting on student progress toward the vision of the graduate should be relatively smooth. The school decided to focus the state-mandated culminating senior experience beginning with the class of 2023 on a digital portfolio that demonstrates growth in the learning expectations over the four years of school. As the vision of the graduate becomes more embedded in the life of the school, the focus of the digital portfolio will expand to include aspects of the vision of the graduate that are not currently being assessed. Growth mindset, not currently explicitly assessed, is one of the six key components of the vision of the graduate. The digital portfolio that requires students to reflect on their growth over time in each learning expectation provides an explicit way of assessing growth mindset.

The board of education is currently engaged in a strategic planning process that is centered on the vision of the graduate and on the upgrading of district facilities. While the strategic plan is not yet complete and has not yet been rolled out to other stakeholders, the work done to date reflects the board's commitment to embedding the vision of the graduate throughout K-12 education.

The board and superintendent articulate a commitment to resolving the school's facilities issues, whether through a renovate-as-new project, building a new school, or completing minor renovations to the existing facility. To that end, Tecton Architects was hired to complete a facilities study that will be presented in a community forum during the spring of 2022. This study highlights multiple areas of need that should be addressed; with this information, the board and superintendent will need to determine how and when the extensive facility needs can be addressed.

## **Competency**

Faculty members, staff members, and school and district leaders have the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary to implement effective learning, the Priority Areas, and the vision of the graduate. The faculty is highly collaborative, making effective use of common planning time to improve teaching and learning across the disciplines. The principal is responsive to the professional learning needs of the faculty. Professional development during the 2021-2022 school year has focused on the vision of the graduate and the implementation of the new curriculum for advisory. Teachers and administrators are aware of the changes that will need to be made in the school-wide rubrics and digital portfolio requirements as the vision of the graduate becomes more embedded in the life of the school. The professional staff has already begun the process of revising cornerstone assessments to align more fully with the vision of the graduate. Teacher resilience in the face of the demands of the pandemic exemplifies the willingness of the faculty to maintain their own growth mindset.

## **Capacity**

All educators have time for collaboration provided within their schedules. Each department has common planning time four days per week. This common planning time is used for a variety of purposes, including SRBI, curriculum revision, examination of student work, calibration of rubrics, development of cornerstone assessments, and other professional tasks, such as the mentoring of new teachers and long-term substitutes. Educators are able to submit proposals for summer curriculum writing, which can be done individually or in collaboration with others. Lately, professional learning time has decreased as a result of the pandemic. Increased demands on educator time and decreased availability of substitutes have limited the time that can be spent on professional learning outside of contractual professional development days.

Collaborative time, professional development, and other resources are generally aligned with the school's definition of effective learning, Priority Areas, and the vision of the graduate. Initial professional development for the 2021-2022 school year focused on the newly adopted vision of the graduate. Common planning time is frequently used for curriculum discussions and examination of student work related to departments' cornerstone assessments. The district has recently added two curriculum coordinators to oversee curriculum revision; however, they have been assigned many responsibilities beyond the oversight of their assigned departments.

While the school's faculty and staff reflect a strong capacity for the school's growth as a learning organization, persistent issues with the facility and operating budgets have remained flat or even decreased over the past several years, diluting that capacity. Teacher leaders report that budget cuts have had a significant negative impact in some areas. For example, several departments have experienced staffing cuts that have resulted in large class sizes. Scaling back full-time positions to part-time has hampered the hiring of qualified staff. The anticipated elimination of the library coordinator position will have a negative impact on the ability of the library/media specialist to work in classrooms supporting research and technology integration. Budget freezes have had an outsized impact on semester two classes.

The major strength of the school's Capacity is its human resources. Teachers, administrators, and staff members are dedicated to the well-being of the students. Both students and teachers feel that there are positive relationships among the adults and students in the building, and this was evident throughout the visiting team's classroom observations. The biggest challenge to the school's Capacity is the lack of funding, both operational and capital. The next steps to rectify this include completing and rolling out the 5-year strategic plan and developing and gaining approval for a plan to renovate or replace the facility.

# Additional Information

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## Additional Information

### Changes in ratings from Collaborative Conference report to Summary report:

#### 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: During the winter of 2021, the board of education adopted the Regional School District 17 Vision of the Graduate.

#### Standard 2 Principle 1

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

School's rating in the Summary report: Implementing

Explanation from the school: During the winter of 2021, the board of education adopted the Regional School District 17 Vision of the Graduate. This document was created with input from all key stakeholders (parents, students, staff, and community members), and is being implemented at each grade level in the district. At the high school, it is embedded in all curricular documents, the student handbook, and the student opportunities booklet.

#### 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:

All departments have a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses. Curriculum writing is an ongoing process and PD time and summer curriculum time was and will continue to be used to maintain and update these documents.

#### Standard 2 Principle 9

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

School's rating in the Summary report: Implementing

Explanation from the school: A silver lining of the pandemic was we needed to quickly infuse technology into instruction and learning. All students now have Chromebooks and utilize the Google Suite for education, in addition to other websites and programs, to enhance learning.

#### Standard 3 Principle 1

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

School's rating in the Summary report: Implementing

Explanation from the school: There has always been a school improvement/growth plan, called the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP). Now that there is a vision of the graduate, it is embedded within the CIP and drives a vision for future growth.

# Commendations

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## Commendation

The vision of the graduate that elaborates on the skills and dispositions necessary for success after high school

The involvement of all stakeholders in developing the vision of the graduate

## Commendation

The senior digital portfolio process that will provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate their achievement of the vision of the graduate and showcase their growth

The commitment of the faculty to applying school-wide rubrics with fidelity to assess transferable skills across disciplines

## Commendation

The complete integration of school-wide rubrics into the curriculum and the culminating senior portfolio

## Commendation

The tangible, trackable, and measurable reflection process using data team sheets

The provision of common planning time that supports ongoing curriculum revision and the data team process

## Commendation

The extensive renovations to the field house and auditorium that support the implementation of the curriculum and expand accessibility to the facilities

The 1:1 student Chromebook initiative and the standardization of Google Classroom as the instructional learning platform to facilitate teaching and learning

## Commendation

The dedication of the faculty members, including the library/media specialist and curriculum coordinators, to supporting each other by embracing and implementing new technology

The teachers' use of diverse instructional strategies and practices that are designed to meet the learning needs of each student

## Commendation

The multiple opportunities for students to be active learners who lead their own learning

The variety of assessment strategies that inform instruction and allow students to demonstrate their learning in multiple ways

## **Commendation**

The frequent use of peer feedback to support student learning

## **Commendation**

The school's commitment to developing a growth mindset in both the students and faculty

## **Commendation**

The dedication of teachers, administrators, and staff members to the well-being of students

# **FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES**

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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

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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: Carol Luckenbach** - New England Association of Schools & Colleges

**Assistant Chair: Victoria Sargeant** - Shelton High School

## Team Members

**Karen Borges** - Foxborough High School

**Mrs. Emily Carlson** - Minnechaug Regional High School

**Darlene Listro** - Rocky Hill Public Schools

**Laura Morello** - Cromwell High School