Merrimack School District/SAU 26
School Board Meeting
Preliminary Agenda
May 15, 2023
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room

PUBLIC MEETING

6:00 p.m.	**1. CALL TO ORDER and PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**	Ken Martin
	2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION	Ken Martin
	3. RECOGNITIONS	Ken Martin
	a. All-State Musicians	
	b. Granite State Challenge	
6:30 p.m.	**4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES**	Ken Martin
	a. Superintendent Update	
	b. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Update	
	c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Update	
	d. School Board Update	
	e. Student Representative Update	
6:45 p.m.	**5. OLD BUSINESS**	Ken Martin
	a. Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Update	Jason Pelletier
	b. Demolition Update for Brentwood and Student Services Buildings	Matt Shevenell
	c. Revisit Committee Assignments	Kem Martin
7:00 p.m.	**6. NEW BUSINESS**	Ken Martin
	a. Review of the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs	Deborah Barker
	b. Review of Merrimack High School NEASC Report	Steve Claire
	c. Christa McAuliffe Statehouse Memorial Presentation	Tim McGough
	d. Other	
7:45 p.m.	**7. POLICIES**	Ken Martin
	a. Third Review of Video Surveillance on School Property (EEAA)	
	b. Second Review of Home Education Instruction (IHBG)	
7:55 p.m.	**8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**	Ken Martin
	a. May 1, 2023 Public and Non-Public Minutes	
	b. May 4, 2023 Non-Public Minutes	
8:00 p.m.	**9. ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTS AND GRANTS UNDER $5,000**	Matt Shevenell
	a. State Farm Insurance to MHS S.A.D.D. for $500.00	
8:05 p.m.	**9. CONSENT AGENDA**	Amanda Doyle
	a. Educator Resignations	
	b. Educator Nominations	
8:10 p.m.	**10. OTHER**	Ken Martin
	a. Committee Reports	
	b. Correspondence	
	c. Comments	
8:20 p.m.	**11. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS**	Ken Martin
8:30 p.m.	**12. ADJOURN**	

Revised 5-15-23

2023-2024 School Board Assignments

In-District Committee Assignments (* Denotes District Officer; ▪ Denotes Active Engagement)

Assignment	2022-2023	2023-2024
▪School Board Chair*	Laurie Rothhaus	Ken Martin
▪School Board Vice Chair*	Lori Peters	Laurie Rothhaus
▪Budget Committee	Naomi Halter	Naomi Halter
▪Alternate	Ken Martin	Jenna Hardy
▪ NH School Boards Association (NHSBA) Delegate		
▪Alternate		
▪Curriculum/Instruction/Technology (CIT) Committee **(2 members)**	Jenna Hardy Ken Martin	Jenna Hardy Ken Martin
▪School Bus Stop Committee	Naomi Halter	Naomi Halter
▪ Professional Development Committee	Lori Peters	Lori Peters
▪Alternate	Ken Martin	Ken Martin
▪ Planning & Building Committee	Laurie Rothhaus	Laurie Rothhaus
▪ Wellness Policy Implementation Committee - **Last active 2019**	Lori Peters	Lori Peters
▪ Healthcare Cost Containment Committee	Ken Martin	Ken Martin
▪ District Parent Group - **Last active 2018**	Jenna Hardy	
▪ Alternate	Ken Martin	
▪ Communications Committee **(2 members) - Last active 2018**	Jenna Hardy Ken Martin	Jenna Hardy Ken Martin
▪ Policy Committee **(2 members)**	Naomi Halter	Naomi Halter Lori Peters
Superintendent Search **(3 members)**	Lori Peters Laurie Rothhaus Jenna Hardy (rotation)	**Currently Inactive**
▪ Athletic Advisory Committee **(2 members) - New 2023**	N/A	Jenna Hardy Laurie Rothhaus
▪Joint Loss Management Committee - **New 2023**	N/A	Melissa Fazlic Lori Peters
Collective Bargaining:		
▪ Merrimack Teachers Association #1 (MTA)	Laurie Rothhaus	**Currently Inactive**
▪ Merrimack Teachers Association #2 (MTA)	Lori Peters	**Currently Inactive**
Merrimack Education Support Staff Association (MESSA) #1	Jenna Hardy	Laurie Rothhaus
Merrimack Education Support Staff Association (MESSA) #2	Ken Martin	Lori Peters
Advise and Confer #1	Laurie Rothhaus	Jenna Hardy
Advise and Confer #2	Lori Peters	Naomi Halter

Out-of-District Committee Assignments

Assignment	2022-2023	2022-2023
▪Grater Woods Subcommittee (SB Rep Position)	Ken Martin	Matt Shevenell
▪Town Center Committee	Matt Shevenell	Matt Shevenell
▪Parks & Recreation	Naomi Halter	Naomi Halter
▪Alternate	Laurie Rothhaus	Laurie Rothhaus

Disseminated to
School Board on
5-15-2023

Explanation
of
School Board Assignments

Committee	Tentative Time Commitment	Focus
Budget Committee	Evening meetings	Is in receipt of end of year school district fiscal report; examines the School Board's budget as it goes through the review process in preparation for approval by the Budget Committee.
New Hampshire School Boards Association (NHSBA) Delegate	Convenes on a Saturday in October	Attends a Delegate Assembly. Represents Merrimack School Board members' positions.
Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment Integration Committee (CIA-formerly CIT, PERC)	Normally meets third Thursday of each month during the school year from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. or as needed.	To discuss, review and recommend curriculum, instruction, and assessment materials in all formats, as well as technology systems to determine they are academically and aligned to student need.
School Bus Stop	Meets as needed	Takes under advisement parent requests for additional bus stops and/or bus issues that need further review.
Professional Development Committee	Meets second Thursday of each month during the school year from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m.	Considers issues pertinent to the professional growth of educators and support staff in the district. Ensures that the Local Master Plan for Professional Development is revised and fulfilled as stipulated by state requirements.

Disseminated to
School Board on
5-15-2023

Committee	Tentative Time Commitment	Focus
Planning and Building Committee	Meets as needed. When needed, meets the second and/or fourth Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m.	Is an advisory group to the School Board; completes assignments or charges assigned by the School Board related to school facilities.
Wellness Policy Implementation Committee	**Currently Inactive – Last met 2/18/19** Met quarterly or as needed, primarily at the close of the school day.	Implements the district's wellness policy. Discussed and implemented district-wide wellness initiatives for students Has different goals than the Healthcare Cost Containment Committee Sandy will facilitate the Wellness policy for Board review.
Healthcare Cost Containment Committee	Meets every other month with Health Trust representative. HR Director Melissa Fazlic is the current chair	Discusses and implements district-wide wellness initiatives for staff, as well as health care saving measures available through Health Trust.
District Parent Group	**Currently Inactive – Last met 1/29/18** Met quarterly from 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm	Historically consisted of two representatives from each buildings' parent groups, the superintendent, and two School Board representatives. Discussed issues pertaining to the officers of the schools' parent groups and become informed about district programs.
Communications Committee	**Currently Inactive - Last met 11/27/18**	Started in 2017 to address the communication protocols for the district. Some framework was started, but incomplete.

Disseminated to
School Board on
5-15-2023

Committee	Tentative Time Commitment	Focus
Policy Committee	Asynchronous meetings, primarily through email correspondence	Review draft polices as needed for school board consideration and adoption. Consider adding an applicable administrator who could provide insight into the implementation of individual policies.
Superintendent Search	Met as needed	Conducted search for the district's superintendent. The Board recently extended CEO Olsen a two-year contract. **This committee could move to inactive status at the Board's discretion.**
Collective Bargaining or Advise & Confer MTA (Professional Staff) – Fall 2025 MESSA (Support Staff) – Fall 2023 Advise & Confer – Fall 2024	Begins meeting in the fall with frequent meetings thereafter during contract negotiation years.	Formulates a collective bargaining agreement with the professional staff or support staff. Formulates an agreement through an Advise & Confer process with Principals/Assistant Principals and Directors of Student Services, Technology/Library Media, and Student Wellness.
Athletic Advisory Committee	***New committee needed – currently being formed by Athletic Director Soucy. Vice Chair Rothhaus is Board representative.**	**Draft:** Review policies, practices, and protocols related to our athletic programs?
Joint Loss Management	***New committee needed to be in compliance with RSA 281-A:64** Would need to meet at least quarterly	Development of district safety program and review losses through workers' compensation.
Grater Woods Subcommittee	**Currently Inactive** Could be called to meet for updates to the plan that is currently 10 years old.	Discuss Grater Woods Stewardship Plan, which includes the use of property near Merrimack Middle School.
Town Center Committee	Meets on the 3rd or 4th Friday of each month at 12:00 noon.	To implement the Merrimack Town Center Pedestrian and Trail Master Plan.

Disseminated to
School Board on
5-15-2023

Committee	Tentative Time Commitment	Focus
Parks and Recreation Committee	Meets the third Wednesday of the month at 7:15 p.m.	Keeps the School Board informed about the town's Parks and Recreation agenda that might inform the board's decision making.
Merrimack 275 Anniversary Committee	Meets as needed	Celebration of the town's 275th anniversary

AUDIO AND VIDEO SURVEILLANCE ON SCHOOL PROPERTY

Video Surveillance

The Board authorizes the use of video devices on District property to ensure the health, welfare, and safety of all students, staff, and visitors to District property and to safeguard District buildings, grounds, and equipment, as well as for any other purpose to the extent either required or prohibited by law. The Superintendent will approve appropriate locations for surveillance devices. Placement of the video cameras will be based on the presumption and belief that students, staff and visitors have no reasonable expectation of privacy in areas or at events that occur in plain view. However, there will be no video devices in bathrooms or locker rooms.

Signs will be posted on school buildings to notify students, staff, and visitors that video cameras may be in use. Parents and students will also be notified through the student handbook. Students will be responsible for any violations of school rules caught by video surveillance.

The District will retain copies of video recordings until they are erased, which may be accomplished by either deletion or copying over with a new recording. ~~In no event, however, shall the recording be retained for longer than 10 school days unless the school district determines that the recording is relevant to a disciplinary proceeding, or the court orders that it be retained for a longer period of time.~~

Depending on the circumstances, video recordings may become a part of a student's educational record or a staff member's personnel record. The District will comply with all applicable laws related to record maintenance and retention.

Video/Audio Recordings on School Buses

While video surveillance is permitted on both District property and school buses, audio recording shall ***only*** be allowed on school buses while students are being transported to and from school or school activities. See RSA 570-A:2(k). The Superintendent shall ensure that there is a sign informing the occupants of school buses that such recordings are occurring.

Audio surveillance on school buses will only be reviewed if there has been a report of an incident or a complaint relative to conduct on the school bus, and only that portion of the audio recording which is relevant to the incident or complaint shall be reviewed.

In no event shall an audio or visual recording be retained for longer than 10 school days unless the school district determines that the recording is relevant to a disciplinary proceeding, or the court orders that it be retained for a longer period of time.

Student Discipline

Video and/or audio (if on school bus) recordings may be reviewed by District personnel for discipline purposes. If disciplinary action is taken as a result of the recording, the

parent/guardian of the student may request to view the recording with the Principal or his/her designee.

Recordings containing evidence of a violation of student conduct rules and/or state or federal law will be retained until the issue of the misconduct is no longer subject to review or appeal as determined by board policy or applicable law. Any release or viewing of the video will be in accordance with applicable state and federal laws, including but not limited to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Student Instruction and School Activities

Nothing in this policy shall preclude the use of audio or video recordings for student instructional purposes or for use in the instruction of teacher interns or student teachers after written notification to the parent or legal guardian of each affected student as to the purpose of, and privacy policy for, the recordings.

The School Board also authorizes the video and audio recording of synchronous and asynchronous instruction and the following school-releated activities. The following purposes are not intended to be exhaustive and may be expanded or contracted by either administrative determination or School Board action:

- Extracurricular/co-curricular activities
- Musical performances, band, concert band, ensemble, orchestra, choir
- Drama activities
- Club events
- Sporting events, including both inter and intra-scholastic
- Other activities such as student senate, yearbook, school pride, ROTC
- Ceremonies, orientation, presentations, school assemblies or meetings, or any school events which occur outside of the physical classroom.

Special Education

Video and audio recordings may be used for Special Education or Section 504 purposes, when a student's individualized education program or accommodation plan includes audio or video recording as part of the child's education. All such recordings will be maintained in accordance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. Section 1232g, and other applicable law(s).

~~Videos containing evidence of a violation of student conduct rules and/or state or federal law will be retained until the issue of the misconduct is no longer subject to review or appeal as determined by board policy or applicable law. Any release or viewing of the video will be in accordance with the laws.~~

~~Video recordings may be reviewed by District personnel for eiscipline and evaluation purposes. If disciplinary action is taken as a result of the video recording, the parent/guardian of the student may request to view the video recording with the Principal or his/her designee.~~

~~Video recordings may become a part of a student's educational record or a staff member's personnel record. The district will comply with all applicable laws related to record maintenance and retention.~~

~~**Video and Audio Recordings on School Buses**~~

~~Audio recording shall only be allowed on school buses, it will only be reviewed if there has been a report of an incident or a complaint relative to conduct on the school bus, and only that portion of the audio recording which is relevant to the incident or complaint shall be reviewed.~~

Legal References:

20 U.S.C. 1232g, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
34 C.F.R. 99, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations
RSA 189:68, Student Privacy
RSA 570-A:2(k)~~(2)~~, Interception and Disclosure of Telecommunication or Oral Communications Prohibited

1st Reading:	October 19, 2009
2nd Review:	November 2, 2009
Adoption:	November 16, 2009

Policy Revision

1st Reading:	April 3, 2023
2nd Review:	May 1, 2023
3rd Review:	May 15, 2023
Revision:	

HOME EDUCATION INSTRUCTION

~~Eligibility~~ Right to Home Education:

The Board ~~recognizes~~ acknowledges ~~that RSA 193-A provides~~ the right ~~for~~ of parents (and guardians) to pursue home education for their children, including any "child with a disability" as defined under RSA 186-C:2, I and I-a, within the parameters of ~~requirements and evaluation set by the New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE)~~ RSA 193-A and its implementing regulations.

Home education is an alternative to compulsory attendance at a public or private school (see RSA 193:1) and is an individualized form of instruction in accordance with Chapter 279:2, laws of 1990. Instruction shall be deemed "home education" if it consists of instruction in science, mathematics, language, government, history, health, reading, writing, spelling, the history of the constitutions of New Hampshire and the United States, and an exposure to and appreciation of art and music. See RSA 193A:4. Home education shall be provided, coordinated, or directed by a parent for his or her own child.

This Policy is intended to help Merrimack School District ("the District") personnel and home education families within the District understand their respective responsibilities. Nothing in this Policy, however, should be understood to infringe upon a parent's rights under the applicable laws and regulations.

~~Enrollment~~ Notification Procedures:

A. Selection of Participating Agency

A parent seeking to provide a home education program to their child(ren) is required to select one of the following as a "participating agency" for that program:

1. The Commissioner of ~~Any parent commencing a home education program for a child who withdraws from the School District shall notify~~ the New Hampshire Department of Education,
2. The Superintendent of the Merrimack School District, or
3. The Principal of a non-public school.

The selection of the participating agency will determine the extent to which the District has responsibilities relative to the home education program.

B. Notification to Participating Agency

Within five (5) business days of commencement of ~~the~~ a home education program, the parent is required to provide notice to their chosen participating agency, a notice which shall ~~Such notification shall~~ include the names, addresses and birth dates of all children who are

HOME EDUCATION INSTRUCTION
(continued)

participating in the home education program. The parent shall also provide contact information and update the notification information as necessary. ~~If such notice is provided to the Superintendent, s/he shall acknowledge receipt of notification within fourteen (14) days.~~

Upon request, the selected participating agency shall work with the parent in helping them meet the essential requirements of a home education program as set out in RSA 193-A:4, I.

A parent may select a new participating agency at any time. If a parent selects a new participating agency, the parent shall notify the new participating agency in the same manner as outlined above.

If the parent has selected the Superintendent of the District as the participating agency, the Superintendent shall acknowledge receipt of notification within fourteen (14) days in accordance with the contact information provided by the parent, along with a request for any information required by RSA 193-A:5, II (i.e., the names, addresses, and birth dates of all children who are participating in the home education program) that was not included in the original notice.

Conventional attendance policies of the District and ~~State~~ New Hampshire law apply to all students within the District until the Commissioner of Education, the Superintendent of the District, or the principal of a non-public school acknowledge the establishment of a home education program. Likewise, these laws and policies ~~or~~ immediately apply upon the termination of any home education program so acknowledged.

C. Notification to the Merrimack School District

Regardless of the parent's selection of participating agency, if the child is currently enrolled in a public school within the District, the parent shall also notify the District's Superintendent of the child's withdrawal on or before the date that home education shall begin, following the notification procedures of this Policy.

D. Annual Notification and Termination ~~Required~~ Requirement

Once established, the home education program remains in effect unless terminated pursuant to Ed 315.06. The parent is not required to provide annual notification of continuation of a home education program.

Written notice of termination of a home education program must be filed by the parent with the Commissioner of the Department of Education and the participating agency within 15 days of said termination. See Ed 315.06. If the Merrimack School District is the participating agency, the Superintendent will acknowledge receipt of the notification within fourteen (14) days. ~~A parent planning to continue a home education program after the commencement of such a program shall notify the Department of Education or Superintendent by the first day of each school year of the parent's intent to continue the program.~~

HOME EDUCATION INSTRUCTION
(continued)

E. Notification Required Upon Moving

Any parent who previously notified the Superintendent of a home education program who moves outside of the District shall notify the Superintendent that the child has moved from the District and shall provide notification to the new school district under the same procedures outlined in this Policy and New Hampshire law.

~~The Superintendent shall assist parents in making such notification and in complying with applicable statutory requirements.~~

Parental Record-Keeping:

Per RSA 193-A:6, I, a parent must maintain a portfolio of records and materials relative to their home education program. The portfolio shall consist of a log which designates by title the reading materials used, and also samples of writings, worksheets, workbooks, or creative materials used or developed by the child. Such portfolio, *which at all times remains the property of the parent*, shall be preserved for 2 years from the date of the end of the instruction.

Access to the portfolio shall be at the parent's discretion, except as provided for in RSA 193-A:6.

Annual Evaluation Procedures:

Per RSA 193-A:6, II, ~~Parents must maintain a portfolio of records and materials relative to the home education program and~~ a parent must provide for an annual evaluation documenting their child's demonstration of educational progress at a level commensurate with the child's age, ~~and~~ ability, and/or disability ~~in accordance with RSA 193-A and NH Code of Administrative Rules, Ed 315.~~

A. District Assistance with Evaluations:

If a parent selects the District's Superintendent as the participating agency, the District must provide evaluation services upon request of the parent. If the District is not selected as the participating agency, the District may choose to aid in an evaluation, but it is not required to do so. See Ed 315.08(b).

Parents ~~electing~~ seeking to ~~request~~ use ~~that~~ the ~~School~~ District's evaluation services should contact the Superintendent's office as soon as practicable; however, this notification must occur ~~personnel carry out the annual evaluation must make arrangements to do so with the Assistant Superintendent~~ prior to the end of the public-school year. ~~In this case~~ Following such a request, the Assistant Superintendent shall work collaboratively with the parent to ~~provide~~ coordinate the provision of evaluation services. ~~if the parent so requests~~.

HOME EDUCATION INSTRUCTION
(continued)

B. Evaluation Methods

Per RSA 193-A:6, II, a child shall be deemed to have successfully completed an annual evaluation upon meeting the requirements of any one of the following:

1. A certified teacher or a teacher currently teaching in a nonpublic school who is selected by the parent shall evaluate the child's educational progress upon review of the portfolio and discussion with the parent or child;
2. The child shall take any national student achievement test, administered by a person who meets the qualifications established by the provider or publisher of the test;
3. The child shall take a state student assessment test used by the resident district; or
4. The child shall be evaluated using any other valid measurement tool *mutually agreed upon* by the parent and the participating agency. A non-exclusive list of examples may be found in Ed 315.08(f).

C. State or Local Assessment Provided by the District

If a parent selects the evaluation method of a state or local assessment provided by the District, they must notify the Superintendent in writing as soon as practicable to provide the District adequate time to prepare and obtain the testing materials. See Ed 315.07 (c). The District will not charge a fee for providing or administering tests under this section, regardless of whether the District was selected as the participating agency. See Ed 315.04(e).

D. Portfolio Reviews

If the District's Superintendent is the selected participating agency, the parent may request the District to perform a portfolio review, for which the District may charge a fee. Any requests for portfolio review should be directed to the Assistant Superintendent, who will work collaboratively with the parent on lining up the review. Portfolio reviews will be conducted in accordance with Ed 315.08 (d) and (e).

~~The Assistant Superintendent will develop a form that may be used by parents in filing the results of the outside evaluation. Principals will send copies of the evaluation to the parents.~~

~~The Assistant Superintendent will review the results of the annual education evaluation of the children in home education programs. If the home-educated child has not demonstrated the level of educational progress mandated in RSA 193-A, the Assistant Superintendent will notify the parent in writing that educational progress has not been achieved and will follow procedures outlined in RSA 193-A. Likewise, the Assistant Superintendent will notify the parent in writing within 21 days of the evaluation if the child has demonstrated educational progress. The Assistant Superintendent will ensure that the evaluation includes all information, dates and signatures required by state statue and/or regulation.~~

HOME EDUCATION INSTRUCTION
(continued)

E. Allowable Uses for Evaluations

Parents shall maintain a copy of their evaluations: however, they need only provide the evaluation results and/or the child's portfolio to the District to the extent necessary to demonstrate the child's academic proficiency in order to participate in public school programs, and co-curricular activities which are defined as school district-sponsored and directed athletics, fine arts, and academic activities. The District may also request the child's portfolio and evaluations as part of a special education referral and/or eligibility determination in the event the child re-enrolls in the District; however, the parent shall not be required to share these records.

Annual evaluations shall not be used as a basis for termination of a home education program. However, they do provide a basis for a constructive relationship between the parent and the evaluator, both working together in the best interest of the child.

Re-enrollment into the School District:

Parents deciding to re-enroll their children into a school within the ~~School~~ District following a period of home education may make arrangements through the Assistant Superintendent for an evaluation to determine appropriate placement in the school's program. Parents should be aware that when re-enrolling a student, there might be discrepancies between the home schooling level of achievement and the scope and sequence of the District's curriculum. Placements will be consistent with the School Board policy governing student placements and are subject to the same appeal process. See Board Policy JG.

Graduation/Diplomas:

The Merrimack School District ~~will provide the opportunity to earn a Merrimack High School standard diploma for home education students who enroll in Merrimack High School at the age of 16 or at the beginning of the junior year (11th grade) whichever comes first and who have followed the Diploma Program Process for Home Educated Students (see administrative procedures.~~ will not award certificates or diplomas to home educated students. Students must enter the regular school program and complete all necessary graduation requirements of the Merrimack School District and the state to be eligible for a certificate or diploma.

Participation in School Curricular and Co-curricular Activities:

Home educated children residing within the district shall have access to curricular courses and cocurricular programs offered by the District to the same extent available to children enrolled within the District's public schools and shall be subject to the same participation policy and eligibility conditions as apply to public school students.

HOME EDUCATION INSTRUCTION
(continued)

~~Participation of home education students in programs and activities are subject to the following conditions.~~

1. ~~Parents of home education students must attest that their children are enrolled in a home schooling program.~~

2. ~~All students are subject to the same age, performance, and prerequisite standards for admission to courses and co-curricular activities.~~

3. ~~Home education students seeking admission to courses requiring prerequisites will be asked to demonstrate academic achievement comparable to that required of fully enrolled students meeting prerequisite standards. The Assistant Superintendent will discuss alternative ways to demonstrate achievement with the parents of home-educated pupils. Final determination of a student's qualifications to enroll in a course requiring prerequisites will be made by the building principal.~~

4. ~~Students may not enroll for single subjects that are taught as part of integrated courses – those courses that cover two or more subjects and are taught by a single individual or team – but may seek admission to the complete integrated course.~~

5. ~~Participation in athletic and other extra-curricular programs and activities will be in compliance with the school's eligibility requirements as well as with the guidelines adopted by the New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association. See Policy JJA, Student Activities, Organizations.~~

6. ~~It may be neither practical nor feasible for home-educated pupils to participate in special programs that have unclear or flexible schedules. The parents of home-educated pupils must take the initiative to check with the school on the scheduling of events and possible changes that may occur.~~

7. ~~The parents of home-educated pupils may be asked to provide supervision for some activities on the same basis as the parents of fully enrolled students.~~

The District's Reporting and Record Keeping Obligations

On October 1 of each year, the Superintendent shall prepare a report to notify the Commissioner of the number of children for whom home education programs were established for whom the Superintendent was selected as a participating agency since the previous report.

The District will maintain record of a student's enrollment and withdrawal from the school in the same manner as it would for a student transferring to another district. The district shall also

HOME EDUCATION INSTRUCTION
(continued)

maintain a record of its status as the participating agency for as long as it holds that status. While the parents keep any portfolios and evaluations conducted outside the District, the District will maintain record of any involvement it has in assessments as it would for any other student.

Legal References:

RSA 193-A, Home Education
RSA 193:1, Duty of Parent; Compulsory Attendance by Pupil
~~RSA 193:1-a, Dual Enrollment~~
RSA 193:1-c, Access to Public School Programs by Nonpublic or Home Educated Pupils
NH Code of Administrative Rules, Section Ed 315, Procedures for the Operation of Home Education Programs

Appendix IHBG-R

1st Reading: February 2, 2009
2nd Review: February 16, 2009
Adoption: March 16, 2009

Policy Revision
1st Reading: May 1, 2023
2nd Review: May 15, 2023
Revised:

Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
May 1, 2023

5:30 p.m. – Non-Public Session per RSA 91-A:3, II (a) (b) (c) – Merrimack TV Training Room

- **Staff Welfare**

Present: Chair Ken Martin, Vice-Chair Laurie Rothhaus, Board Member Naomi Halter, Board Member Jenna Hardy, and Board Member Lori Peters. Also present were Assistant Superintendent for Business Matt Shevenell, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Amy Doyle, Chief Educational Officer Everett (Bill) Olsen, and Student Representative Kaitlyn Vadney.

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Martin called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr. Gary Krupp, 4 Ministerial Drive, addressed the Board and said he was present to address the issue of coaching evaluations at the high school Athletic Department. He said as a concerned parent, he had provided constructed feedback to the Athletic Director, the principal, and the Superintendent over the past three years on coaching evaluations without any discernable action being taken. He added that he felt it was essential for the district to establish a comprehensive evaluation system that included input from students, parents, and coaches. He said the system should be transparent, objective, and provide coaches with constructive feedback that would enable them to improve their skills and better serve the student athletes.

Chair Martin asked if any other members of the public wished to make public comments. There was none.

3. RECOGNITIONS

There were no recognitions.

4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES

a. Superintendent Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the following week was Teacher Appreciation Week and the district would be recognizing the staff.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated that Friday was "School Lunch Hero Day" where the district would recognize school Food Service workers.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the business students participated in the New England Food Truck Challenge. He said the New England College received over 100 submissions and multiple students were winners.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said Senior Week ticket sales had begun. He said the events included a movie on the football field, a trip to Six Flags, a senior semi-formal on the Mt. Washington, and the Hawk Walk. Ha also said the 4th-grade classes and one multi-grade class at the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School spent time weeding and cleaning up the flowerbeds at the school. He added that the families of the 3rd and 4th graders were invited to join Unified Arts Team also from the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School for the year-end Showcase of Learning Celebration on Tuesday, May 23rd from 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated the middle school had seven band students and two chorus students working very hard to prepare for Saturday's South Central District Honor Band and Chorus Festival.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen thanked everyone for all the support for the Robotics Team at the high school. He said the Robotics Team qualified for the second year in a row for the FIRST Championships in Houston.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said that Mr. Kevin Huran, a paraprofessional and music instructor was offering rock band programs to the Merrimack Parks & Recreation students from the Reeds Ferry Elementary, the Thorntons Ferry Elementary, and Merrimack schools.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said students from the James Mastricola Elementary School would be participating in the American Cancer Society's "Relay for Life" on June 17th in Derry, NH. He also said the Merrimack Granite State Challenge team had defeated Hopkinton to advance to the finals. He said the finals would air on New Hampshire public broadcasting on Thursday, May 11th.

b. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Update

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle commented that they were entering their spring assessment schedule and encouraged parents to attend school on the days of testing. She said she had received a lot of positive feedback from teachers regarding the transition to iReady.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle said the last early release for the school year would be on May 26th and would develop differentiated options for the teachers and staff to ensure that they were meeting their specific needs. She said they would also offer kindergarten screenings for the Class of 2036.

c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Update

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said additional leaks had been discovered on the roof of the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, and the repairs would begin as soon as possible.

d. School Board Update

Chair Martin thanked teachers in honor of Teacher Appreciation Week. He also said it was School Principal's Day as well.

e. Student Representative Update

f. Student Representative Vadney said tickets for Senior Week were on sale. She added that permission forms were required to be signed by parents, noting that there were no exceptions.

5. OLD BUSINESS

a. Town Council Meeting Update

Chair Martin said he and Vice-Chair Rothhaus attended the Town Council meeting where they discussed the possibility of moving the voting day to the Town of Merrimack back into the month of March. He said he did not think the idea was received particularly well, and it was decided to keep it as it was.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus said the Town Council suggested that perhaps the School Board could think outside the box in terms of attracting interest in working for Merrimack. Board Member Peters replied that outside of the box would require funding.

6. NEW BUSINESS

a. Pathways to Graduation Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen commented that when he first started working for the school district, he noticed that they did not have a program to provide an alternative pathway for whom a comprehensive high school education was not the most well-suited for their needs. He said he was happy to announce that the district was on track to implement the beginnings of a program for the 2023 – 2024 school year, much in part by hiring Mr. Harley Hall.

Mr. Harley Hall, Director of Graduation Pathways and Extended Learning Opportunities addressed the Board and said the first goal was to keep the students that they already had and earn a diploma. He said it was not an alternative program or GED program, or a special education program, but that it was a high school diploma. He said, however, it did not have the same graduation requirements set for by the School Board for Merrimack High School. He said it met a completely different RSA for high school graduation, but it was still a diploma.

Mr. Hall said the students would be allowed to take different coursework in the evening while still remaining in the building for most of their courses. He said the RSA allowed the program to grant elective credits in areas that a traditional high school program could not do. He said the programs would be held at Merrimack High School after hours, exact times to be determined.

Mr. Hall said to the extent possible, Merrimack teachers would teach the classes and would be paid a stipend for four hours per week and would be expected to work with their Pathway students in the same fashion they worked with their day students. He added he would reach out to past students who had dropped out to see if he could help them get their diplomas, noting that all students under the age of 18 would need parental/guardian consent.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus asked if there was any kind of funding available for people who could not afford the courses. Mr. Hall replied in the affirmative.

Board Member Hardy thanked both Mr. Hall and Vice-Chair Rothhaus for all of their hard work getting the program up and running and for writing and receiving the grant monies. Chair Martin also expressed his thanks.

b. Merrimack High School Athletics Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said coaching was becoming more difficult and demanding in every school district across the country.

Mr. Mike Soucy, Director of Athletics, addressed the Board and discussed what high school athletics and what it should be as summarized below:

- Highly competitive club programs and AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) programs whose focus was to prepare young adults to advance in their particular sport. To get scholarships and develop their athletic skills.

- Parks & Recreation programs to give students the base knowledge of a sport, to expose them to different things, and to have fun along the way.

- High school athletics had a hand in both worlds; one being "win at all costs" and one "was let's have fun."

Mr. Soucy said the purpose of high school athletics was to teach the students about life skills that they needed so they were prepared for all of the challenges life would throw at them. He said sportsmanship was at the forefront of everything.

Mr. Soucy stated the goal was to enhance the academic mission of the school and to teach students some of the soft skills they needed.

Mr. Soucy quoted Ms. Karissa Neihoff, CEO of NFHS (National Federation of High School Athletics Associations): "High school sports have become too focused on performative and not enough on formative." Mr. Soucy said he would like to bring it back to the formative part of things, but noted that did not mean that they were not going to try to compete to win. He said the goal of high school sports was to win, but that it was not their purpose. He said the purpose was in the development of their young men and women.

Mr. Soucy said kids were under so much pressure these days with family obligations, and academic obligations, and some played multiple sports and were pulled in multiple directions.

Mr. Soucy said it was important to bring the "fun" back. He said the coaches should criticize privately but yell at the rooftops in applause. He said he felt if coaches were to trip up sometimes it had to do with communication.

Mr. Soucy said quality coaching, per the U.S. Olympic and Para-Olympic Committee, was defined as the consistent application of integrated professional interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge to improve athletes' competence, confidence, connection, and character in a specific coaching context.

Mr. Soucy stated the school district had 71 paid coaches for 21 sports and 47 teams. He said he felt the district needed more coaches. He also said more educators should be coaches.

Mr. Soucy said upon his hiring six years prior, he developed a coaching evaluation assessment as stated below:

- Varsity head coaches were evaluated after every season with the tools used in the Coaches Handbook.

Mr. Soucy said he sent out a confidential evaluation to each athlete so they could provide comments on their coaches.

Board Member Peters explained that the School Board had received several emails over the past two years from parents that were consistent with similar teams and coaches and the parents did not feel like they were being heard. She said at what point did Mr. Soucy feel it was time to let a coach go because athletes were leaving teams because of the coaches. Mr. Soucy replied that it would depend on the circumstances and if at the end of the day, the majority of students were having good experiences, then they would work with the coach to develop a better relationship with the athletes that he/she was not having a good relationship with.

Board Member Peters suggested that a confidential survey should be sent out to parents to see how they felt about their students' coaches. Mr. Soucy replied he could do that.

Board Member Hardy said she felt it was very important to have a very clear evaluation given to the coaches, and the students and parents should all fill out surveys regarding the evaluations.

Board Member Hardy also suggested that there should be a Parent Advisory Committee comprised of parents of athletes from different sports.

Mr. Soucy said since Covid-19, there was a decline in female participation in sports and their struggle with mental health. He said they were going to gather a group of coaches, parents, and administrators who would meet once per month initially and have discussions. Board Member Hardy said she felt it should be a more widespread discussion about all athletes.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus said in 2016 and 2017 she was involved in the NHIAA (New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association) Self-Assessment Tool for Creating an Athletic Culture through the Life of an Athlete. She said she felt the conversation she heard was all about the rights of everyone except for the coach's rights. She said if there was a legitimate concern then they needed to find a solution. She said there was not one coach who had 100% support from the athletes but that did not mean the coach was not a good one. She also said she did not agree that the parents should be evaluating the coaches.

Mr. Soucy said even if the coaches were doing all the right things, the athletes who did not get off of the bench were having a hard time and the parents were frustrated.

Board Member Halter asked if there was a student-athlete handbook available. Mr. Soucy replied there was.

Board Member Hardy said she felt it was very important to find a way in which athletes and parents could make complaints without the fear of being retaliated against. Mr. Soucy said he agreed.

c. 2023 – 2024 School Board Assignments

Assignment	**2022 – 2023**	**2023 - 2024**
School Board Chair	Laurie Rothhaus	Ken Martin
School Board Vice-Chair	Lori Peters	Laurie Rothhaus
Budget Committee	Naomi Halter	Naomi Hater
(Alternate)	Ken Martin	Ken Martin
NH School Boards Association (Delegate)		
(Alternate)		
Curriculum/Instruction/Technology (CIT) Committee	Jenna Hardy Ken Martin	Jenna Hardy Lori Peters

School Bus Stop Committee	Naomi Halter	Naomi Halter
Professional Development Committee	Lori Peters	Ken Martin
(Alternate)	Lori Peters	Ken Martin
Planning & Building Committee	Laurie Rothhaus	Laurie Rothhaus
Wellness Policy Implementation Committee	Lori Peters	Lori Peters
Healthcare Cost Containment Committee	Ken Martin	Ken Martin
District Parent Group	Jenna Hardy	Jenna Hardy
(Alternate)	Ken Martin	Ken Martin
Communications Committee	Jenna Hardy Jenna Hardy	Ken Martin Ken Martin
Policy Committee	Naomi Halter	Naomi Halter
Superintendent Search Committee	Lori Peters Laurie Rothhaus Jenna Hardy (Rotation)	Lori Peters Laurie Rothhaus Jenna Hardy (Rotation)
Collective Bargaining		
Merrimack Teachers Association #1 (MTA)	Laurie Rothhaus	Laurie Rothhaus
Merrimack Teachers Association #2 (MTA)	Lori Peters	Lori Peters
Merrimack Education Support Staff Association (MESSA) #1	Jenna Hardy	Laurie Rothhaus
Merrimack Education Support Staff (MESSA) #2	Ken Martin	Lori Peters
Advise & Confer #1	Laurie Rothhaus	Naomi Halter
Advise & Confer #2	Lori Peters	Jenna Hardy

Out-of-District Committee Assignments

Assignment	2022 – 2023	2023 - 2024
Grater Woods Subcommittee (SB Representative position)	Ken Martin	Ken Martin
Town Center Committee	Matt Shevenell	Matt Shevenell
Parks & Recreation	Naomi Halter	Naomi Halter
(Alternate)	Laurie Rothhaus	Laurie Rothhaus
Merrimack 275 Anniversary Committee	Laurie Rothhaus	Laurie Rothhaus

Board Member Hardy asked that the Board not vote on the 2023 – 2024 School Board assignments to allow some time for additional conversations. She added that she felt the Athletic Advisory Committee should be added to the list. Further, Board Member Hardy said two of the committees she was given, the District Parent Group, and the Communications Committee had not met in the entire time she had been a member of the Board.

Board Member Halter stated that she felt it would be a good idea to take another look at the list of committees to see if they still existed.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus said she was not yet sure if the Athletic Advisory Committee would be a sitting committee or just a couple of meetings to hear parent input. She further stated that some committees only met a few times per year.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus suggested that the School Board should vote on the committee assignments as proposed and then they could go back and figure out what needed to be changed.

Board Member Hardy commented that she felt additional conversations needed to be had which would include the designees for collective bargaining as it was very concentrated with the same two people. She said she would like to see the newer members of the Board learn from the more experienced members as was past practice.

Chair Martin stated that he could certainly see the point Board Member Hardy was making but his thought process was that the support staff in the district was in such a critical shortage across the board. He said he thought the two people who hit it out of the park with the Collective Bargaining Agreement in the past year had more than qualified themselves to negotiate the contract.

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to table voting on the 2023 – 2024 School Board Assignments until the next meeting. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Vice-Chair Rothhaus stated that she felt the Board should discuss any changes as they could not meet in a non-public meeting regarding the topic.

Board Member Hardy expressed interest in serving on the Merrimack Education Support Staff Association to assist in negotiating the contract.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell commented that he did not think the Communications Committee had been active since 2017.

Board Member Peters commented that she felt the Wellness Committee had been integrated into the Healthcare Cost Containment Committee.

Board Member Hardy called the question.

MOTION CARRIED: 3 – 2 – 0. (Nay – Chair Martin, and Vice-Chair Rothhaus)

d. Call for 2023 NHSBA Resolutions

Chair Martin said that each NHSBA member-school board was allowed to submit one or more proposed resolutions. Proposals may be a new resolution or may seek to amend any current NHSBA resolution. Each member-school board may send one voting delegate to the Annual Delegate Assembly, however, any board members are invited to attend. He said the deadline for submitting such proposals was Friday, July 28, 2023, at the close of business.

Board Member Halter said she felt it was important to send someone to the Delegate Assembly on Saturday, October 14th because that was their vote and voice.

e. Gallop Survey

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle stated that the district had received information about participating in the New Hampshire Student Gallop Poll. She said since its launch in 2009, the Gallop Student Poll had helped schools better serve students by providing positive measures that support engagement in school and create hope for the future. To date, the Gallup Student Poll had been completed over 6 million times in schools and districts across

the country. She said the Milford School District had been invited to participate in the New Hampshire version of the Gallup Student Poll. She said there was a 24-item academic survey for students. She said it would be anonymous, voluntary, and take about 10 minutes to complete. She said if the Board approved the survey, it would be given to students in grades 7 through 12 between May 8th and June 6th of 2023, but they would also be agreeing to give it in 2024, and 2025.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle said the poll measured the elements of student engagement, hope, and career-connected learning. She added there would be no cost to the district.

MOTION: Board Member Peters made a motion that the Merrimack School District participate in the gallop three-year longitudinal data study. Vice-Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

f. Other

Vice-Chair Rothhaus commented that members of the School Board could participate in the 4th of July parade.

7. POLICIES

a. Home Education Instruction (IHBG) 1st Review

MOTION: Board Member Halter made a motion to waive the first reading of policy (IHBG) Home Education Instruction (IHBG) and post it on the district's website for public comment. Vice-Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

b. Video Surveillance on School Property (EEAA) 2nd Reading

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said he had not received any comments on the policy, and it had been thoroughly reviewed by legal counsel.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. April 17, 2023 – Public and Non-Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Peters made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 17, 2023, public, and non-public meetings, as presented. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

9. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Educator Resignation

There were none.

b. Educator Nominations

- Ms. Kaleigh Lemieux, Elementary Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- Mr. Ryan McKenna, Physical Education Teacher, James Mastricola Elementary School

- Ms. Kylie Salvatore, Elementary Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- Ms. Bridget Bishop, Elementary Teacher, James Mastricola Elementary School
- Ms. Hannah Schwack-Trovitch, Elementary Teacher, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School
- Ms. Hannah Greene, Elementary Teacher, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School
- Ms. Caroline Mahoney, Elementary Teacher, James Mastricola Elementary School
- Ms. Amanda Apostolou, School Counselor, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School

MOTION: Vice-Chair Rothhaus made a motion to accept the educator nominations. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

c. Administrator Nominations

- Mr. Chrigus Boezeman, Middle School Principal, Merrimack Middle School
- Ms. Sara Reinhardt, Director of Student Services, Districtwide

MOTION: Vice-Chair Rothhaus made a motion to accept the administrator nominations. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

10. OTHER

a. Committee Reports

There were no reports to share.

b. Correspondence

Vice-Chair Rothhaus said she received correspondence, and she referred them back to the chain of command.

Board Member Peters said she received correspondence, and she encouraged that person to speak during public comments.

Chair Martin said he received correspondence and hopefully addressed the concerns shared.

c. Comments

Vice-Chair Rothhaus said she received some very positive feedback regarding the huge safety training last week at the high school, noting, however, a prior alert would have been preferable.

11. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Heather Robitaille, Springfield Circle, addressed the Board and said she thought the District Parent Group used to be a quarterly meeting between a representative of the parent/teacher organizations from each school and shared best practices and ideas.

Ms. Robitaille also thanked Chair Martin and Vice-Chair Rothhaus for opening a dialogue with Town Counsel regarding changing the voting date and the impact that it had on the district's ability to compete for contracts.

12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At approximately 8:25 p.m. Board Member Peters made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

Merrimack School District
Gifts and Grants Acceptance Form

Name of Recipient: MHS S.A.D.D. - Advisor Mallory Niemaszyk
School Name

Name of Donor: Dan Bantham - State Farm Insurance
Name

289 Daniel Webster Hwy.
Street Address

Merrimack | NH | 03054
Town/City | State | Zip Code

Amount of Gift or Grant: $500.00 **Date of Receipt of Gift or Grant:** May 9, 2023

Please answer each of the following questions:

1. **Describe the purpose of gift/grant:**

   To support the activities of S.A.D.D.

2. **Describe any specific restrictions or requirements attached to gift/grant:**

   To be used only for S.A.D.D.

3. **Describe any recurring costs associated with the gift/grant:**

   N/A

I, Jill Hanlon do hereby determine that it is in the best interest of the Merrimack School District to accept such gift or grant and hereby request the acceptance of the gift/grant by the Merrimack School Board.

Signature — 5/10/23 Date
Principal/Director

Published in the _____ on _____
Date

Presented to Merrimack School Board (Public Hearing) _____
Date

Accepted by Merrimack School Board on _____
Date

By a vote of ____-____-____.

All Gifts and Grants to the Merrimack School District are to be accepted in accordance with RSA 198:20b and Warrant Article II of the 1991 Annual Merrimack School District Meeting.

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, INC.
COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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May 4, 2023

Stephen Claire
Principal
Merrimack High School
38 McElwain Street
Merrimack, NH 03054

Dear Mr. Claire:

The Commission on Public Schools, at its March 5-6, 2023 meeting, reviewed the Decennial Accreditation Report from the recent visit to Merrimack High School and voted to award the school continued Accreditation in the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

The Commission was impressed with the progress made on the Priority Areas for Growth and increased alignment with the Principles of Effective Practice since the time of the Collaborative Conference visit and wishes to commend the following:

- the safe, positive, respectful, and inclusive culture of the school
- the dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research and best practices used to develop the school's vision of the graduate
- the clear connection between the vision of the graduate and the school's growth plan
- the growing number of teachers engaging in Understanding by Design curriculum training and professional development and the district purchase of Eduplanet21 curriculum software to achieve the goal of better vertical and horizontal curriculum alignment
- the commitment of staff to create curricula that emphasizes authentic learning and embeds the skills and competencies necessary to attain the school's vision of the graduate
- the school and system commitment to develop and implement an extensive array of programs to support the social and emotional development of students
- the range of timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies available for all students, including identified and at-risk students, that support each student's success and well-being including MTSS-based Tier 1-3 supports
- the commitment of staff to learn and use tools and applications of technology in the classroom and the support provided by the district's IT staff in supporting the integration of technology across the school
- the culture of collaboration and innovation with technology fostered by both teachers and the district's technology coordinator

- the wide variety of in-home and in-school mental health support services available to students and families

The Commission was pleased to note five of the six Foundational Elements in the Standards for Accreditation have been met by the school. The Commission acknowledges that the following Foundational Element has not been met by the school since the Collaborative Conference visit, and the school will continue to work on it as Priority Area for Growth as part of the Accreditation Process:

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

While schools typically make substantial progress in meeting the Foundational Elements after the Decennial Accreditation visit, if this does not occur, the Commission may ask the school to explain the reasons and include a plan to ensure such progress.

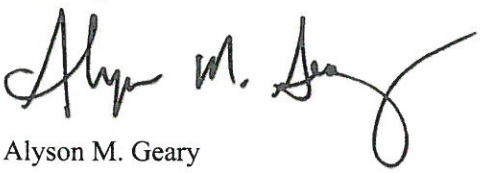
The Commission requests a First Report of Progress and Planning by February 1, 2024. This report will ask about the school's alignment to the Foundational Elements, ask the school to list exemplary practices, and request a copy of the school's revised School Growth/Improvement Plan based on the Next Steps provided by the visiting team for each of the Priority Areas for Growth.

All Accredited schools must submit a required Three-Year Report of Progress and Planning, which, in the case of the Merrimack High School, is due on February 1, 2026. Information about the proper preparation of the Three-Year Report of Progress and Planning will be provided to the school in the near future.

The Commission congratulates the school administration and faculty for completing the first two phases of the Accreditation Process: the Self-Reflection and the Accreditation visit. The next step will be the Follow-Up Process, during which the school will continue to implement a School Growth/Improvement Plan, based on the school's Priority Areas aligned with the Standards for Accreditation and report progress toward implementing those priorities. The Commission's Follow-Up Seminars should help you and your faculty develop a schedule for implementing your Growth/Improvement Plans. In addition, the Commission's website includes information on Follow-Up procedures.

The school's Accreditation status will be reviewed when the Commission considers the First Report of Progress and Planning. The school's First Report of Progress and Planning should be submitted only by the principal through the Accreditation Portal by clicking on the green "Mark Progress Report Complete" button. As well, please notify the Commission office immediately of any changes in the names of the principal and/or superintendent, along with their corresponding e-mail addresses, by submitting this information electronically to cpss-air@neasc.org.

Sincerely,



Alyson M. Geary

AMG/mms

cc: Everett V. Olsen, Interim Superintendent, Merrimack School District
Cinda Guagliumi, School Board Chair, Merrimack School District
Amy C. Clark, Administrator of School Facilities, New Hampshire Department of Education
Paul MacMillan, Chair of the Visiting Team
Kevin McCaskill, Chair, Commission on Public Schools

New England Association of School and Colleges, Inc.

Commission on Public Schools



Commission on Public Schools

Report of the Visiting Team for Merrimack High School

Merrimack, NH

05-15-2022 - 05-18-2022

Mr. Paul MacMillan, Chair
Mrs. Mary Devaney, Assistant Chair
Stephen Claire, Principal

School and Community Summary

School and Community Summary

School and Community Summary

NEASC School and Community Summary

The town of Merrimack is a suburban community located between the two largest cities in New Hampshire, Manchester to the north and Nashua to the south. According to the 2020 census, the population was 26,632. The median family income was $107,232. The unemployment rate as reported by NH Employment Security in 2021 was 3.7 percent, and 3.9 percent of the town's families were living below the poverty level.

The town's largest five employers are Fidelity Investments, PC Connections, Merrimack Premium Outlets, BAE Systems, the Merrimack School District, and Atrium Maquet Getinge Group. All other businesses employ 600 or fewer people.

There are six public schools and two independent schools within the town of Merrimack. For the 2020-2021 school year, the student population of the Merrimack School District was 89.5 percent white non-Hispanic, 3.3 percent Hispanic, 4 percent Asian, 2.2 percent African American, 0.7 percent American Indian/Alaskan Native, 0.26 percent Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and no students were listed as being of two or more races.

On February 28, 2021, there were 1,131 students enrolled at Merrimack High School in grades 9 through 12. 1,167 students were enrolled in the 2020-2021 school year, and 1,194 were enrolled during the 2019-20 school year. Although enrollment has declined from a high of approximately 1,700 students twelve years ago, the student population has been relatively stable in recent years.

For the 2020-21 school year, Merrimack High School's per pupil expenditure was $18,724 which was higher than the state average of $17,758. In 2020, 65 percent of the local tax resources were spent on local schools, with a total of 74 percent of local tax resources spent on public education.

The graduation rate for the Class of 2021 cohort was 86.3 percent. The dropout rate for the same school year was 7.2 percent, which was an increase due to the pandemic. Fifteen students (4.9 percent) from the cohort have since completed graduation requirements or their HiSet equivalency, while 5 (1.6 percent) more students are still currently actively pursuing a diploma or HiSet.

The average student daily attendance rate for the 2020-21 school year was 94.7 percent.For the last quarter of the year (when school was back to being fully in-person), the average daily teacher attendance rate was 93.2 percent.In that year, Merrimack High School graduated 264 students; 68 percent of whom continued their education after high school in a four-year institution, with 22 percent attending a two-year college or seeking other post-secondary education, 4 percent going directly into a career, and 2 percent joining the military, leaving 4 percent undecided.

In addition to the variety of classes offered at Merrimack High School, some students are eligible to take classes not offered within our typical program of studies. Limited numbers of students are accepted into career and technical education programs with local high schools. The Nashua Technology Center offers 2-year programs in a variety of fields such as biotechnology, education, computer networking, construction technology, cosmetology, culinary arts, electrical trades, financial services, health sciences, machining, and pre-engineering. The Wilbur H. Palmer Career & Technical Education Center at Alvirne High School offers 2-year programs in a variety of fields such as veterinary science, heavy-duty mechanics, welding, and forest/wildlife management. Students may also earn up to four credits in online or virtual learning classes. The high school's Evening Academy is an option for students to earn make-up credit to help fulfill graduation requirements or for enrichment. Credit recovery courses are available for students who have failed a class during the regular school year through the school's Summer Institute Program. Students and community members may sign up for a variety of enrichment classes through the Merrimack Adult Education Program which offers courses in the fall and spring. The Merrimack town library provides additional educational opportunities to the community throughout the year.

Prior to the pandemic, the school's gifted and talented program offered in-school fine arts performances and a variety of field trips to historical sites, libraries, and museums. Trips were regularly organized to locations such as Italy, Quebec, Costa Rica, and China. Many of these activities had to be put on hold due to health concerns. We plan to resume these activities once the pandemic has subsided.

Merrimack High School also offers students opportunities through partnerships with community businesses. Programs for students with physical, emotional, or cognitive disabilities (GetSet, Bridges, Pass, etc.) include job experiences in the community. The transition coordinator works with students to place them at various job sites such as local daycares, restaurants, farm stands, and a local veterinary hospital. Post-secondary planning and post-secondary work experience are full-year courses open to seniors, focusing onactivities that enhance self-awareness, work readiness skills, and interpersonal skills. Work experience credit may be earned by students who successfully complete and document at least 80 hours (about 3 and a half days) of work per quarter in employment approved by the teacher.Many of these work experiences involve partnerships with local businesses. BAE offers apprenticeships for juniors and seniors which can lead to full-time jobs. The FIRST program partners with BAE and Raytheon. This program was paused due to the Pandemic, however, reconnecting with BAE for the 2022/23 school year is planned. NH Scholars is an academic program made possible through a partnership with several local businesses and organizations which encourages and motivates students to complete a rigorous academic course of study. NH Scholars has also sponsored a financial literacy partnership with Fidelity's Emerging Leaders Program that pairs recent college graduates with MHS students interested in finance. This was also paused due to the pandemic. Prior to COVID, Rock the Street, Wall Street was a program that partnered with Fidelity Investments to move female students forward in the field of finance. We hope to resume this program when we can safely do so. The IMPACCT Program, a partnership with NH Vocational Rehabilitation and Granite State Independent Living, helps students with disabilities become part of the local workforce. Project SEARCH, a partnership with St. Joseph Hospital, provides employment and education opportunities to individuals with cognitive and physical disabilities.

The Running Start Program gives seniors a chance to earn college credit while still attending high school. In cooperation with the New Hampshire Community Colleges, Merrimack High School students may earn both high school and college credit for some courses.Southern New Hampshire University'sDual Enrollment Program also allows high school students the opportunity to earn college credits while in high school.

Merrimack High School recognizes student achievement, both academic and non-academic, in several ways. Notable student achievements of all kinds are celebrated on the large screen monitor outside the main office, on the school website, and in the principal's annual report to the town. Some students are invited to school board meetings to present their achievements. These meetings are televised to the local community. The honor roll is published on the school website and in local newspapers. Merrimack High School also recognizes student achievement through its Math, Art, and Business Honor Societies, as well as through The McGaw Chapter of the National Honor Society. Students who excel in athletics are recognized at seasonal athletic awards banquets, through NHIAA Scholar Athlete Awards, and through All-Academic Team membership. An annual awards ceremony honoring student achievement takes place prior to graduation. Seniors who are in the top 15 percent of their class graduate with an Honors Diploma. Students who have distinguished themselves academically may wear New Hampshire Scholars pins and honor society stoles at graduation.

Core Values, Beliefs, and Vision of the Graduate

Core Values, Beliefs, and Vision of the Graduate

Merrimack High School's core values and beliefs are reflected in the Vision of the Graduate.

Vision of the Graduate

Merrimack High School students engage in authentic learning that prepares them with necessarylife skills to become independent as individuals and active participants as citizens upongraduation.

Merrimack High School Graduates are PositiveCommunity Members

Graduates are effective, creative, and critical thinkers. They feel empowered to be leaders, to careabout their self-worth, others, and their local and global community. This may be evidenced bybeing resilient, ethical, open-minded, confident, and flexible.

Merrimack High School Graduates are Future Ready

Graduates are driven to achieve their goals. Merrimack High School graduates take ownership ofand responsibility for their choices and will continue to be self-directed, lifelong learners.

They have prepared for this by:

- Participating in a dynamic curriculum that aligns to the State and National Standards.
- Developing executive functioning skills.
- Becoming digitally and financially literate.
- Developing communication skills in areas of listening, speaking, and writing.

LEARNING CULTURE

Learning Culture

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

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

STUDENT LEARNING

Student Learning

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

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

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

Professional Practices

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

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

LEARNING SUPPORT

Learning Support

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

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

LEARNING RESOURCES

Learning Resources

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

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

Introduction

Introduction

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

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

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

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

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit

Accreditation coordinators and a steering committee comprised of the professional staff were appointed to supervise the school's Accreditation process which includes the self-reflection, the Collaborative Conference visit, the development and implementation of a growth plan, and the Decennial Accreditation Visit. At Merrimack High School, a committee of five members, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the Accreditation process.

Public schools seeking Accreditation through the Commission on Public Schools must complete appropriate materials to assess their alignment with the Standards for Accreditation and the quality of their educational offerings in light of the school's core values, beliefs, vision of the graduate, and unique student population. In preparation for the decennial visit, schools are required to complete a Decennial Summary Report to inform the team about their progress since the time of the Collaborative Conference visit.

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

The Process Used by the Visiting Team

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

school's improvement/growth plan.

Each conclusion in the report was agreed to by visiting team consensus. Sources of evidence for each conclusion drawn by the visiting team are included within each section of the report. The report includes commendations and recommendations that, in the visiting team's judgment, will be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning and implement its plan for growth and improvement. The report also includes an analysis of the conceptual understanding, commitment, competency, and capacity (4Cs), which is a framework used to evaluate the school's ability for continuous growth and improvement as a learning organization.

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

Foundational Element 1.1a - Learning Culture

Foundational Element 1.1a

Students and staff feel safe and secure at Merrimack High School. The school has safety policies and procedures that are currently being reviewed and updated. All doors to the building are locked daily at 7:30 a.m. All visitors and students need to request entry through the main entrance with a remote locking system operated by the main office after 7:30 a.m. Office staff can see visitors through a glass partition, and a speaker system allows communication between visitors and office staff. Once in the main office, visitors must show their identification before they are allowed to enter the school. Visitors are given name tags that include their name and photograph to ensure easy identification.

The school has established two safety committees. One is a district-wide safety committee comprised of district administrators, building administrators, and the school resource officer. There is a separate building safety committee of building administrators, the school resource officer, and teachers who volunteer to serve on the committee. These two groups did not meet during the pandemic, so all the work these committees did was suspended. This school year, they have begun to meet again and have resumed their work in updating the district and school safety procedures. The district committee has been focused on updating a fifteen-year-old emergency response district-level flip-chart. This chart is kept in all the classrooms and is a reference guide for teachers in an emergency. The goal is to complete the update by June 2022 and have it available for the 2022-2023 school year.

The district safety committee has several safety initiatives in the works. In September, all district-level administrators were trained in Civilian Response to Active Shooter Event (CRASE). The next step is to train all building-level safety teams in September 2022. The school-wide training will happen at the end of the 2022-2023 school year. The school runs and evaluates ten school-wide safety drills in compliance with the local police and fire department throughout the school year. This coming school year, the principal would like to focus these drills on the updated safety procedures so staff and students become familiar with them.

School administrators, department heads, counselors, and other selected individuals in the building carry walkie-talkies to facilitate quick communication in an emergency. The school resource officer contributes to the safe environment at the school by providing a connection to the Merrimack police department. The Merrimack police department leaves one of its radios in the main office with a panic button on the radio. If that button is pushed, it will notify the police department of an emergency at the school. Officers will respond immediately to the school. This system is tested monthly by the school resource officer.

The school is committed to making the school safe. Teachers must complete Crisis Prevention Institute training to help prevent crises through de-escalation strategies. The staff has voluntarily attended three Stop the Bleed classes held at the school. This class is a national program on stopping bleeding using pressure dressings and tourniquets. Staff members are also required to complete training in bullying prevention.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 1.2a - Learning Culture

Foundational Element 1.2a

Developing a vision of the graduate was one of the school's priority areas. The driving question in developing the vision of the graduate was, "What do MHS graduates need to know, and what should they be able to do to be successful?" There were three phases in developing the school's vision of the graduate. Phase one was developing the process to involve all stakeholders and getting the vision of a Merrimack High School graduate. Phase two was to take all the data from all stakeholders and synthesize, distill, and create a draft of the school's vision of the graduate. This draft was reviewed and adjusted based on feedback from students, parents, staff, and administrators. Phase three was the approval process. The school's vision of the graduate has been approved by the staff and was recently approved by the school board. The school board is now taking the school's vision of the graduate and making it a PreK-12 initiative called the Merrimack Public Schools Vision of a Learner. School administrators and staff worked hard to create the school's vision of the graduate despite the pandemic interruptions. While they have introduced it to students, parents, and the community, a full rollout to all stakeholders is still in the planning stages.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 2.2a - Student Learning

Foundational Element 2.2a

The school does not yet have a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments. The school district has undergone leadership changes at the district and building levels, affecting the continuity of ongoing priorities. For the 2021-2022 school year, there is a new superintendent, a new assistant superintendent for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and a new high school principal.

Although each department has a written curriculum for required courses, the documents are not in a consistent format, and not all electives are complete. The English, social studies and world language departments are in various stages of rewriting their curricula but are waiting for the vision of the graduate to be adopted. The math and science departments have completed curriculum revisions within the last two years. The science department is adding the Next Generation standards into their curriculum using the district's newly purchased Eduplanet21 curriculum software. Health and physical education departments are presently rewriting their curricula using Eduplanet21. These updated curriculum units consist of state standards, essential questions, concepts and skills, and what Eduplanet21 calls "essential learning components." These components include instructional activities and tasks aligned with the standards, as well as formative and summative assessments, including authentic performance tasks. These model curricula will be posted on the district website and implemented during the 2022-2023 school year. They will serve as templates for future curriculum revisions and updates. All revised curricula will include ELCs, assessments, and performance tasks that inform student growth and progress. This work will help move toward a dual grading system, including traditional grading aligned with competency-based grading.

Rating

Does Not Meet the Standard

Foundational Element 3.1a - Professional Practices

Foundational Element 3.1a

The school has a current school growth plan. Developing a school growth plan was another Priority Area for the school. The school steering committee captured and tallied areas of need from teachers and staff at faculty meetings. The committee looked at ways to generalize feedback to create goals for the growth plan. The committee looked at current practices in the building, such as teaching critical thinking skills, Universal Design for Learning, interdisciplinary courses, and using student information systems. The committee then looked at short-term goals, such as retaining staff, self-directed learning, and more technology and STEM opportunities. The committee's next step was to look at long-term goals, such as more activities in homeroom to promote critical thinking, a senior capstone project, and a middle block for lunch and meeting with teachers (flex block). The committee also reviewed input from students who suggested more leadership opportunities, a need for financial literacy, and more hands-on and project-based work. The committee took this information and began to build a growth plan with three primary goals. This draft was presented to the faculty, and after adjusting and reviewing it, the faculty adopted the plan.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Elements 4.1a - Learning Support

Foundational Elements 4.1a

The school provides a wide range of student intervention strategies and has a process to identify and refer students who need additional assistance. Teachers guide students with academic and social-emotional challenges to their school counselors. Counselors consult parents and review available options to determine the best course of action.Students who require less intensive interventions receive extra help from classroom teachers before, during, or after school. Those needing ongoing assistance in core academic subjects receive this help through the school's skills center. Students needing to recover credits may do so through the school's Evening Academy or Summer Institute. Online learning opportunities are provided through the Virtual Learning Academy Charter School, Keystone, or IMPACCT,a partnership with NH Vocational Rehabilitation and Granite State Independent Living, helps students with disabilities become part of the local workforce. Students determined to be at-risk might be referred to the Youth Educational Employment Services program designed to create a safe, therapeutic environment for students before their behavior escalates to one requiring disciplinary action. The school recently created an in-school intervention program that enables students to keep current with academic work during absences from class due to behavioral issues.

In addition to the above list, MHS offers a range of learning support services to students whose challenges limit their access to the general education curriculum. The school's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program offers support and interventions for English language learners. Merrimack High School's gifted and talented program (Gateway) provides extension services to students who seek additional learning challenges. The school's new in-school intervention program enables students to keep current with their academic work during absences from class for behavioral issues. The school seeks to ensure students have every opportunity to succeed.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 5.1a - Learning Resources

Foundational Element 5.1a

The community and district provide adequate school buildings andfacilities that support the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services. The bulk of the facility was built before 1976. Therefore, some of the infrastructures have not kept pace with their needs. Some areas of concern include the size of the theater and gymnasium, limited athletic fields, and the difficulty in regulating temperature in the building. The library, which is evolving from a traditional school library to a learning commons, will be refurbished through a local donation in the summer of 2022. The area around the main office and classrooms is also scheduled to be renovated. The district had air quality testing done in the summer of 2020. Rooms of concern were closed during the 2020-2021 school year and the start of the 2021-2022 school year, while air filtration systems were put in each impacted room. Since 2018, the school has added 17 new exterior and 54 new interior cameras. Although there are still a few blind spots, the additional cameras have significantly improved building security. The school is clean, well-maintained, and respected by students and staff.The school meets all applicable federal and state laws and is in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Elements Ratings

Foundational Element Ratings

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

Priority Area 1

Priority Area

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

Action, Impact, and Growth

Since the collaborative visit, the school developed and implemented a process to develop its vision of the graduate. The first step in this process was to send two staff members to the NEASC conference, which focused on the process of developing a vision of the graduate. Following the training, they created two driving questions: "What should a graduate know?" and "What should a graduate be able to do?" Next, they created a survey with more detailed guiding questions, which was submitted for school board approval in November 2018. In August 2019, school administrators engaged the entire staff in a discussion and activity to elicit responses to the guiding questions. Students participated in a similar exercise in their homerooms. District staff also engaged in a process to respond to the guiding questions. In addition to staff and student input, parents and community members were involved using surveys that included the same guiding questions. After the data was gathered, a volunteer vision of the graduate committee, consisting of seven teachers, the principal, a school counselor, three parents, and two students, was formed in the fall of 2019. This committee aggregated the input from all the stakeholders and ultimately identified twelve skills or attributes specified in the data and then distilled those into two main categories: positive community members and future-ready. Due to the pandemic and staffing changes, the work on the draft took place over two years. In the fall of 2021, the committee met with the principal and the assistant superintendent to review the work and finalize the draft. At this point, the vision of the graduate was shared with the entire staff, who were invited to provide feedback and comments. The committee reviewed the feedback and finalized the document. At the October 2021 faculty meeting, 95 percent of the school's faculty voted to approve the vision of the graduate. The district's curriculum, instruction, and assessment committee approved the document in November 2021, with full school board approval coming in March 2022. Since garnering school board approval, the school has had posters depicting the vision of the graduate created and installed in each learning and office space in the building. Students have been exposed to the vision of the graduate by participating in an activity conducted in an extended homeroom. Teachers used the vision of the graduate to begin the work on the growth plan.

The vision of the graduate process has served as a point of reunification after COVID and some staffing changes. Staff reports that the work done during and after the development of the vision of the graduate document has helped reaffirm recent curricular decisions. The level of collaboration has made teachers feel heard and included.The impact of the vision of the graduate has had district-wide reach. The school faculty have used it to develop their growth plan, and the three corresponding goals (attainment of transferrable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success) are found within the plan. In addition, district-level leaders have taken the work done at the school and have begun to develop a PreK-12 Vision of a Learner, which will vertically articulate the progression of each Merrimack student.Teachers and staff are beginning to use this document to inform the development of curriculum and assessments. This process will be ongoing as it is in the initial stages of implementation. Full implementation of the vision of the graduate will allow stakeholders to make informed curricular and spending decisions that will continue to improve alignment and ultimately increase student achievement.

The steering committee hopes that the vision of the graduate will provide a framework to help drive learning and improve achievement in their students. They anticipate this document will support teacher learning to improve curriculum and instruction. The school will need to decide how they will begin tracking and assessing students' progression as they work to meet the vision of the graduate. Developing rubrics or standards for the elements in the vision of the graduate is essential to help ensure that students meet all of the elements. For this to be an effective tool, the school will need to develop a way to measure, track, and report student progress to students and families. They will also need to incorporate the aspects of the vision of the graduate into the curriculum and fabric of the school in meaningful ways.

Students report having limited knowledge and understanding of the vision of the graduate and how it applies to them. The students know that the document is hanging up in learning spaces but are not intimately acquainted with the document's content. Students report that they may have done an activity centered around the vision of the graduate during an extended homeroom. An area of growth would be to engage current students in a process where they become familiar with the goals and intent of the document. Administrators and staff must provide students with opportunities to see how their coursework and daily lives are applied to the vision of the graduate. This work should complement ongoing curriculum and competency work.

Recommended Next Steps

- Purposefully incorporate the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate into student learning, professional practices, and the allocation of resources.
- Develop measurable competencies and rubrics to evaluate the progression of students toward achieving the expectations outlined in the vision of the graduate.
- Engage in professional development and PLC work to collaboratively align curriculum and instruction with the vision of the graduate.
- Engage students, families, and community members as partners to ensure that each student has the tools and support necessary to achieve the school's vision of the graduate.

Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- classroom observations
- priority area meetings
- priority area observations
- school leadership
- school summary report
- students

Priority Area 2

Priority Area

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 (3.1).

The school/district has short-term and long-term plans to address the capital and maintenance needs of its building and facilities (5.4)

Action, Impact, and Growth

The school has identified its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate and is working towards developing growth areas and addressing short- and long-term goals. The growth plan includes goals for maintaining and upgrading the high school facilities. Staff, students, and the community were included in the plan's development.

The school board recently approved the vision of the graduate, and further development of the growth plan can move forward. The steering committee is focused on these three goals for student learning:
1. To adopt rubrics to measure student skills as they demonstrate them across the curricula
2. To align teaching practices with Universal Design for Learning guidelines
3. To update emergency response procedures as part of a school safety plan

The first goal of the school's growth plan is to adopt rubrics to measure student skills as they demonstrate them across the school's curricula. Many teachers use course-specific or project-specific rubrics, but no school-wide rubrics exist. Some students are familiar with rubrics and use them to complete assignments and projects in various courses. Students in honors, AP, and comprehensive classes in 10th through 12th grades state that they regularly use rubrics in classes, even in elective courses, and they indicate that rubrics are most often used in science and English classes. The school has begun to develop rubrics to measure progress on student skills across curricula. The school growth plan contains a comprehensive action plan and the timeline for the development of these rubrics. The steering committee has been exploring different school-wide rubrics from other high schools. Teachers have begun to envision critical elements of the rubric related to the work on the vision of the graduate. The timeline indicates that by December 2022 a new committee will be formed devoted to developing the school rubric. The following year the committee will include additional teachers to work on alignment with the vision of the graduate. They will also evaluate the extent to which the skills in these rubrics are embedded in the curricula. In the spring of 2024, the plan will be shared with students, parents, and the community for feedback with approval and support from the administration. Prior to the start of the 2025-26 school year, teachers will embed applicable skills into the existing curricula, assess students' skills using the course-appropriate rubrics at the end of each semester, and monitor progress through PowerSchool.

A second goal of the school, the alignment of teaching practices with Universal Design for Learning guidelines, is a work in progress. The Merrimack School District is working with the Center for Applied Special Technology to empower staff UDL teams at each school to learn about the UDL philosophy and lead school site professional development. The focus is to allow students to use multiple ways to demonstrate knowledge and to improve differentiated instruction to ensure learning for all students. This is particularly important now that the school has moved from four levels to three levels. The school reports that 85 percent of the student population is assigned to the middle or comprehensive level. The remaining 15 percent of students take classes at either the honors/AP level or the foundations level. As a result of this change, comprehensive-level classes are becoming far more diverse, making it even more important for the school to continue and complete its work in this area.

Many students remember completing a survey that looked at learning styles, and in AP and honors classes, students indicate that they have rubrics and clear guidelines for expectations. Those students report numerous

ways of showing knowledge through posters, essays, websites, videos, working in groups, mock trials, hands-on projects, performances, reports, multiple-choice, short answers, and fill-in-the-blank. Students also describe the different choices they were given to show their knowledge. Multiple students expressed that in most classes, the guidelines and expectations for assignments were clear and posted on Canvas. It is clear that some teachers teach multiple ways to study and approach a problem, but this is not yet a pervasive practice across the school.

A well-thought-out action plan is outlined in the school growth plan. The timeline includes continuing consultation with the CAST consultant. The school's UDL team will be responsible for ensuring that time is set aside for faculty meetings and establishing professional development for all staff through 2024.

All students and staff benefit from improving their executive functioning skills. Developing these skills for both students and teachers will significantly impact the level of learning in the general education population. Working with a consultant on executive functioning skills will also increase continuity throughout every classroom in the delivery of curriculum, creating clear expectations and timelines, developing and using rubrics, and giving students the skills to be more independent learners. Universal and consistent guidelines related to executive functioning processes throughout the school will ensure that all learners can access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities.

The school's third school improvement goal is to update emergency response procedures as part of a school safety plan. The district and school crisis response teams composed of administrators, teachers, and a resource officer are working to update this plan. They meet monthly and write goals together. They are forming two groups - one to develop a safety backpack for each classroom. The other group will focus on being lockdown experts and assisting in the training. Next school year, eight hazard drills will be devoted to training. The first whole school training is scheduled for September 2022. There have been other pieces of training, such as Stop the Bleed, taught by paramedics for the staff. This work will update emergency flipcharts for all classrooms in the district. They are implementing training for staff through the Civilian Response to Active Shooter Event (CRASE). Other possible security measures are being researched, such as updating locks and panic buttons. There is a direct line to the police department in the main office. As a result of these efforts, students felt safe in the building. All students indicated that if a student had an issue or concern, there was an adult they could seek out for support and who would follow through with getting help.

The school's growth plan includes a number of initiatives to address a variety of needs at the school. Currently, there is a district-wide mentoring program to ensure that teachers who are new to the district know and understand the initiatives that are underway at the school and district. Some teachers express concern that this program may be eliminated.

Recommended Next Steps

- Ensure that the school growth plan is regularly reviewed and revised to reflect the needs of the school
- Complete the creation of rubrics and develop processes to provide feedback to learners and their families on each learner's progress in achieving the school's vision of the graduate
- Ensure that the tenets of Universal Design for Learning are embedded in curricula and in instruction for classes at all levels across the school
- Ensure that staff members new to the school have a complete understanding of school and district initiatives and best instructional practices

Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- classroom observations
- department leaders
- priority area meetings
- priority area observations

- school leadership
- school summary report
- students
- teachers

Priority Area 3

Priority Area

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 (2.2).

Action, Impact, and Growth

Currently, all departments have written curricula for each required course, but they are not in a common Understanding by Design format, and curricula for elective courses have not been developed. Since the Collaborative Conference visit, some teachers have worked with one of the developers of the UbD curriculum model and have begun the process of curriculum mapping. The priority is establishing a district-wide consistent format for all curricula. Both recently revised and current curricula will be formatted using UbD. The math and science departments have completed curriculum revisions within the last two years. These curricula contain units of study with guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, and required skills, though they are not written in a consistent format. The English, social studies, health and physical education, and world language departments are in various stages of rewriting curricula. This work was put on hold until the school established its vision of the graduate. The pandemic also had a significant impact on the delay of this work. The district has purchased Eduplanet21, a web-based software product that will house all curriculum work. The updated curricula will consist of state standards, essential questions, concepts and skills, and what Eduplanet21 calls essential learning components, such as learning activities and experiences, instructional strategies, formative and summative assessments, including authentic performance-based projects and activities. The district is in the process of using Eduplanet21 in the revision of the social studies, health, and physical education curricula. These model curricula will be posted on the district website and implemented during the 2022-2023 school year.

The district embraces Universal Design for Learning to design instruction to meet the needs of all learners. The curriculum work will connect UDL with UbD to create a cohesive, living document that will help teachers make expectations and outcomes accessible and understandable for all students in each subject area. The curriculum work that has been done has resulted in teachers looking at assessment practices, such as common assessments in grades five through twelve, performance tasks, and multiple ways students can demonstrate competencies.

The district's vision of a learner may serve as the pillar for future curriculum revision. The curriculum work that has been done by the science, social studies, health, and physical education departments using Eduplanet21 will serve as models for future curriculum revisions and updates. All revised curricula will include essential learning components and assessments as well as performance tasks that inform student growth and progress. This work will help the school move toward its goal of a dual grading system, including traditional grading aligned with competency-based grading. A curriculum aligned with essential questions throughout the subjects will promote critical thinking and communication skills and will improve instruction and assessments. The assistant superintendent, who has been leading much of the curriculum revision and development work, will be leaving at the end of the 2021 - 2022 school year. Some teachers voice concerns that the momentum may be slowed as a result.

Recommended Next Steps

- Complete curriculum development for all courses in all disciplines as outlined in the school's growth plan
- Ensure that the school's vision of the graduate is integrated into each curriculum unit

Sources of Evidence

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

Priority Area 4

Priority Area

The school community takes collective responsibility for the social and emotional well-being of every student and can demonstrate how each student is know, valued, and connected to thee school community (1.3)

Action, Impact, and Growth

The school has developed and implemented an extensive array of programs to support the social and emotional development of students. The school offers Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 support as part of its developing MTSS model. Across the school, most relationships are strong between adults and students.

The school provides a safe and encouraging learning environment that fosters student success. Multiple courses and co-curricular opportunities are available, consistent with 21st-century learning expectations. The school environment is colorful and welcoming, with artwork and interactive activities across the school. Homeroom is utilized as an advisory time of 10 to 13 minutes, allowing staff and students to focus on relationship-building and self-management strategies. However, although some students report positive experiences in homeroom and describe learning community-building activities and executive functioning strategies, only about half of the homerooms in the building use this time effectively. Extraordinary counseling support is available through a contract with Greater Nashua Mental Health Center for in-school clinical visits. Students can also meet outside therapists via Zoom appointments during the school day. A home-school liaison is available for in-home support and student/parent coaching. A social-emotional learning interventionist who focuses on brief treatment and problem-solving is available for a small percentage of the school population.

The guidance department has five counselors. The department distributes pertinent information and offers various services to meet each student's academic, vocational, and social-emotional needs. Post-secondary options are advertised in the school counseling hallway, including vocational schools, military academies, two and four-year colleges, and a jobs board. Individual meetings with counselors are available by appointment, and students with emergent needs may drop in. Counselors are available to all students for general questions at lunches in the "counselor corner" and are often seen in the library for career-focused drop-in assistance. Social-emotional supports are available for incoming 9th graders wishing for a smooth transition to high school. Between 60 and 65 students may take up to a six-week summer course for academic credit.

As part of the educator evaluation system, teachers self-select performance objectives related to highly effective teacher behaviors that include modeling fairness, respect, and high expectations for student behavior. Other attributes promoted by the Educator Performance Enhancement Committee (EPEC) include encouraging student self-monitoring and showing genuine warmth, caring, and sensitivity to students as individuals to foster positive relationships with students.

There are professional development opportunities in the area of social-emotional learning. Staff members utilize rapport-building strategies in the classroom, such as "would you rather" during attendance-taking practices. Teachers often adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student. When teachers review the criteria set by the school's Educators Enhancement Committee (EPEC) for highly effective teachers' behaviors, if there is an area that needs improvement, they will adjust their teaching as part of the evaluation process. Students are encouraged to take charge of their education by accessing technology programs such as PowerSchool and Canvas, which improve self-management and decision-making outcomes. Students must take health in their sophomore year, which increases their knowledge of various physical, mental, emotional, and social wellness topics.

Some paraeducators work one-on-one with students with more intensive needs, and the majority work in a Tier 2 intervention style in groups in the classroom. These paraprofessionals assist students with IEPs and are

available for all students to access. Skill centers are open for all students. Teachers communicate with skill center staff members to create consistency between the teachers and skill centers. Feedback is mixed on the effectiveness of these centers. Some students report that at certain times, the skill center staff cannot assist them because they don't have the knowledge and skills in all disciplines. As a result, students may have difficulties scheduling extra help and may have to find alternate ways to receive support."

School nurses provide preventative health services to students, working with the guidance office, administration, parents, and the learning support department. The district has hired a Director of Student Wellness to serve all students in the district in response to the community's needs."

A Tier 1 exploration team has been formed as part of the school's Multiple Tiered Student Support (MTSS). An MTSS fidelity inventory, teaming inventory, and initiative inventory have been completed. The programs of the Youth Educational Employment Service are available to provide support in the building for students with at-risk challenges. The student support team (SST) makes referrals to identify students who need Tier 2 and Tier 3 support.

Across the school, students feel safe. Most students report having at least one trusted adult in the building to rely on for assistance when needed. The 10 to 13-minute homeroom sessions are beneficial when staff and students both buy in, fostering a community for many students. The wide range of clubs and activities allows most students to feel connected to their community. Standardized Tier 1 curriculum, such as the sophomore health course, aids in promoting positive decision-making related to personal health and social responsibility. A plethora of support services cast a wide net, reaching and providing support to most students and parents. The addition of a district Director of Student Wellness has improved direct communication and process at the leadership level. The MTSS team uses survey data in conjunction with Keene State and the Behavioral Health Improvement Institute to visualize data to help measure outcomes for MTSS, including discipline referrals, interventions, and goal setting.

Recommended Next Steps

- Ensure that the homeroom advisory period is used effectively throughout the school to support the social and emotional development of students
- Clearly define and assess the availability, quality, and effectiveness of Tier 1 support

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- facility tour
- priority area meetings
- priority area observations
- school leadership
- school summary report
- students
- teachers

Priority Area 5

Priority Area

Ensure that all learners use technology across all curricular areas to support, enhance and demonstrate their learning (2.9)

Action, Impact, and Growth

Since the Collaborative Conference visit, the school has adopted its vision of the graduate which explicitly includes the goal that all learners be digitally literate. Parents, students, and staff agree that digital literacy is growing increasingly important. District technology specialists and teachers have had purposeful conversations about the qualities of a digitally literate graduate. Teachers and staff consistently state the need for students to understand research methods and safe internet practices, understand citation and plagiarism, be responsible digital citizens, and use technology to connect with the community, both locally and globally. Parents and staff across the school want students to use positive social media interactions and understand a digital footprint's lasting impact.

The school has begun to explore ways to communicate and measure digital literacy. Students in English classes frequently evaluate digital sources, such as databases and websites. The vision of the graduate also states that students will engage in authentic learning. In some classrooms, students are using technology for authentic learning. For example, an English assignment has students analyze the websites of professional writers in order to create their own professional writer websites to display their own writing. The assignment includes creating a biography, author notes, and links to their collective works. Each student will leave the course with a professional portfolio. In computer programming, students use their design knowledge to create games to play with friends. One student created an application to help their teacher access information from the periodic table for creating handouts and assessments. Another student used a pH monitor from the school to determine the best shampoo for her hair type. Students in some courses consistently use technology to engage in authentic learning, but engagement in authentic learning is less prevalent in other courses.

The school switched its learning management system (LMS) from PowerSchool to Canvas in the 2020-2021 school year. Teachers report varied comfort levels with Canvas. Although teachers consistently upload assignments and handouts using the Canvas modules, they inconsistently use Canvas to provide feedback to students. Some teachers report an inability to grade assignments through Canvas because of connectivity issues. A few students report getting grades via email rather than through the Canvas portal. In the 2021-2022 school year, teachers began to use a more standardized template to organize their Canvas home pages. Administrators and teachers made this decision in response to surveys of students. Most students report liking the consistency of having similar Canvas home pages for each class. Students across the school prefer the Canvas LMS to the PowerSchool system. While all teachers use Canvas to support students, students consistently report being unaware of deadlines because teachers do not align the assignment window with the actual due date. The school uses PowerSchool as its student information system. Students sometimes check PowerSchool for grade updates. Both PowerSchool and Canvas allow teachers and district leaders to track student and parent engagement with the software. Parents are given login information to PowerSchool, but there is limited use by parents. When the district switched to Canvas, parents were notified via email and could stop by during open houses to ask questions. However, they were not offered formal training or support on accessing Canvas or observing their student's progress.

Social studies, health, physical education, and science teachers are in the process of uploading their curricula into the Eduplanet21 software. All classrooms have an LCD projector and desktop computer. Teachers often use their LCD projectors to assist with instruction. All teachers are issued laptops. Teachers can request additional technology such as iPads, XP Pens, and Mimio. Math and science classrooms project the handouts on the board, and both teachers and students correct problems using dry-erase markers. Some teachers use remotes

or stylus pads. In English classes, course readings are housed online in Actively Learn. Teachers can monitor how long students were engaged with the text online using Activity Learn. In some subject areas, such as math, teachers use a mixture of technology and paper and pencil assignments. The math department is following the school philosophy of educational needs driving the use of technology. Students hand-write assignments and turn them in on paper. All handouts are available online for absent students. Occasionally, students report using programs like Kami to edit pdf assignments and submit them to teachers. Students find this cumbersome, especially if they use district-issued Chromebooks instead of personal touchscreen technology.

The library media specialist plans to develop an area of the learning commons for teachers to try out new technology, such as touch panels, in a supportive environment. The learning commons also curates research and digital citizenship content for educators. The library media specialist also goes into classrooms to support teachers with technology instruction. All teachers can apply to provide formal technology training for colleagues. The staff has access to Canvas training modules and YouTube tutorials. Most teachers support each other in the use of new technology by sharing apps and other ways of integrating technology with peers. This practice grew organically during the pandemic and has continued throughout the 2021-2022 school year.

The school district is committed to providing professional development for teachers through its August Academy and half-day workshops. However, this time is often used for mandatory state training, CRASE, and other district initiatives. The district is committed to providing substitute teachers to allow teachers to collaborate and participate in professional development during the school year. The district has a technology coordinator for grades 9-12 who helps teachers integrate technology into their classrooms. With the addition of Chromebooks available for all students, the library is evolving into more of a learning commons. Before implementing the 1:1 device initiative, students came to the library to access desktop computer labs to complete assignments. Most students now use the learning commons for tech support or as a collaborative workspace. In 2019, the district technology department updated the bandwidth throughout the district. However, now that all students have access to personal or school-issued devices, many students report connectivity issues in study halls and common areas such as the cafetorium. On block schedule days, a student could have 90 minutes to work on assignments and might not have access to the internet, which prevents the use of Canvas. This inability to connect impacts the frustration level of students and timely work completion. There is a plan to increase to 5 gig WIFI. The district technology department is also looking to redesign the physical classroom spaces to support the needs of a 1:1 technology-based classroom. Occasionally teachers report issues with the Canvas platform's reliability. A few teachers state that when district-issued technology would not load the Canvas platform, they had to access it on their personal cell phones. Students in computer design classes can sign out more powerful laptops from the learning commons.

The school's vision of the graduate states that students will be digitally literate. Once the school creates a clear definition of digital literacy and develops the necessary rubrics and other tools to measure student progress in becoming digitally literate, students, parents, and staff will be able to determine the degree to which its graduates are meeting the digitally literate component of the vision of a graduate. When all teachers understand the digital literacy component of the vision of a graduate, they will be able to design instruction that moves students toward digital literacy and will provide all learners with consistent expectations around the effective use of technology. When students are aware of the impact of their digital footprint, they will be able to monitor and become responsible for their lifelong digital citizenship.

Recommended Next Steps

- Involve all stakeholders (parents, teachers, students, and district staff) in the definition, implementation, and evaluation of digital literacy
- Develop and implement goals, standards, and rubrics to measure student progress in the area of digital literacy
- Ensure that the school's technology infrastructure supports the increased use of technology by students and teachers throughout the school
- Develop the expertise and leadership of all staff to enable them to support the development of digital literacy skills in students
- Ensure that all students at all levels have opportunities to build digital literacy skills through authentic

learning activities and projects that integrate technology
- Provide ongoing professional development to ensure that all teachers have the knowledge and skills to integrate technology into curriculum, instruction, and assessment

Sources of Evidence

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

Part 3 - Reflection on Student Learning

Reflection on Student Learning

The newly introduced vision of the graduate is focused on the attributes that enable graduates to function as positive community members who are ready for their future endeavors. Graduates are expected to be effective, creative, and critical thinkers that feel empowered to be leaders. It expects them to care about others and the local and global community, using attributes such as resilience, ethics, open-mindedness, confidence, and flexibility. As part of the expectation that graduates are "future-ready," the school's goal is for them to be driven to achieve their goals and to take ownership of and responsibility for their choices as they continue to be self-directed, lifelong learners. The school believes that it will achieve its vision of the graduate through a dynamic curriculum aligned with state and national standards, developing students' executive functioning and communication skills, and ensuring that students become both digitally and financially literate.

The VoG and the current curriculum work will change instructional practices. The departments that have completed their curriculum work using UbD are starting to see a change in their instructional practices. Several teachers who have completed the curriculum work mentioned how they are now focused on their instruction. This is very much a work in progress. Currently, some instructional practices are designed to meet the learning needs of each student. In one class, theteacher explained the plan for the class period and projected this information on a screen to help students understand the expectations. In another class, the teachergives options for students to work independently, with or without music, or with another peer. In a third class, the teacher provides personal whiteboards for students to show their answers as a formative assessment. In a different class, a teacher repeated a student's response for emphasis. In many classrooms, paraprofessionals provide skills center support for students needing additional support in the regular classroom.

Some students are active learners who have opportunities to lead their own learning. A significant emphasis for the school is to engage all students in authentic learning experiences that will help move them toward the vision of the graduate. Many student work samples demonstrate this commitment. In the classroom, authentic learning activities included having students respond to the question, "Would you rent an apartment? Why?" In another project, titled "What's Up Merrimack!" students were asked to consider the statistical impact of a high-priced home in Merrimack and equate this to the statistical effect of the wealthiest one percent of the national population. Art students are expected to draw a self-portrait from a photograph taken in a city park, and in another example, students develop illustrations for a book they are designing.Students consider the altitude change in ascending Mt. Washington if they are hiking, driving to the summit, or arriving in a helicopter. In some classrooms, students ask for clarification about the context of a situation or ask questions of the teacher and their peers to clarify their learning. MHS has a diverse range of co-curricular activities that showcase student learning. They offer students opportunities to participate in the school newspaper, a science Olympiad, and a FIRST robotics team.

Learners in some classes regularly engage in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills. Evidence of this engagement includes a student sharing his thought process for solving a problem using an unconventional approach, students being asked to make inferences about the relationship between two characters in a book on a quiz, and a student equating a chemical reaction to an algebraic equation. In another class, the teacher prompted a student to explain why there were differences in their tested products. In some classes, however, students were doing activities that required only recall of information, such as taking notes, listening to teachers explaining information from PowerPoint slides, and referencing a textbook for information. The use of inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills seemed to be more prevalent in some classrooms than others. The curriculum work that is being done is focused on improving student engagement in inquiry, problem-solving skills, and higher-order thinking skills for all classes. Shifting the focus to more student-centered, project-based learning that incorporates higher-order thinking skills in all classes will help learners better attain the school's vision of the graduate. Professional development in these areas is required to make this pedagogical shift and build competency.

Learners demonstrate their learning through a variety of assessment strategies that inform classroom instruction and curriculum. These strategies include students having a choice as to how they will demonstrate their understanding of which of the two characters in a book is the better leader. Some students make a political poster, some write an opinion, and others develop a speech. In woodworking class, novice students built small tables for indoor and outdoor use, while an advanced student progressed to creating a table of Shaker design. With the new VoG there is now a shift starting to happen with a push towards authentic learning and assessments. This is very much a work in progress along with the curriculum work and is reflected in the school's growth plan.

Learners have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning, receive feedback, and use this feedback in meaningful ways to support their learning. In one class, students used a rubric to self-assess the quality of their project to determine if more work was needed. In another class, students put their developed sentences on the whiteboard at the front of the class to get feedback. In a music class, astudent changes the sound production on his instrument following feedback from the teacher. In a world language class, students assessed their comprehension of Mandarin text projected on a screen. Students often are expected to take notes and are asked to use rubrics to self-assess the quality of their work to determine if more work is needed.

Learners use technology across all curricular areas to support, enhance, and demonstrate their learning. One student with a disability uses a personal interactive touch screen to communicate. Students access their teachers' digital platforms on Canvas. One student used her phone in class to read a book. MHS offers courses where technology is an integral part of the curriculum. Some of these courses are game design, FIRST Robotics, and computer programming. Many teachers used PowerPoint presentations to illustrate concepts in their lessons. There is a plan to provide more professional development to help teachers integrate technology into their classrooms to enhance student learning.

Part 4 - Capacity for Continuous Growth as a Learning Organization

Conceptual Understanding

The Merrimack High School community generally has a shared understanding of optimal or effective learning. However, complete understanding and planning for the future are in various stages of development. The staff has endeavored to articulate a shared knowledge about effective learning in the vision of the graduate endorsed by stakeholders, including educators, students, and families, and approved by the board of education. Since the school has only recently begun implementing its vision of the graduate, it is not yet fully embedded into the curricula or classroom instruction. The staff believes learning should be authentic, engaging, relevant, and self-directed. They believe that a graduate should be prepared with the necessary skills to become independent as an individual and an active participant as a citizen. According to this vision, a graduate of the school is a creative and critical thinker who feels empowered to lead others and their local and global community. Professional discourse among like-minded members of the school community has focused on devising learning activities and assessments that ask students to demonstrate knowledge, skill, understanding, and proficiency. Developing these performance tasks in adherence with curricula will provide relevancy and connection to real-world problems, higher-order thinking, and a more rigorous standard for student learning. In departments where curriculum writing is completed or well underway, teachers share common assessments and evaluate student work leading to informed subsequent instruction. As a result, the staff is developing a more defined understanding of effective learning as more collaboration and sharing occur.

The school identified five Priority Areas for Growth based on the NEASC standards and principles, aligned with the findings of the Collaborative Conference visiting team. These Priority Areas include developing a vision of the graduate, creating a school growth plan, revising and completing the school's curriculum into a consistent format for all courses in all departments, developing and implementing programs to support each student's social and emotional development, and ensuring that all learners use technology to develop, enhance, and demonstrate their learning. Significant work has been accomplished regarding these Priority Areas for Growth, and the school's continuing efforts should lead to improved collaboration among professionals, more effective teaching, and stronger student outcomes.

A shared understanding of the vision of the graduate will be achieved when the vision is fully developed, and teachers integrate it into their instruction in all classrooms throughout the school. The school staff will spend time between the spring and fall of 2022, gaining a collective understanding of the vision of the graduate and how to incorporate the vision in all aspects of instruction. While the vision of the graduate is universally displayed in classrooms and offices throughout the building, it is not yet a driving force within the school, and few students can specifically connect it to their learning experiences.

The staff has a clear conceptual understanding of the need for a curriculum written in a consistent format for all courses in all departments. An increasing number of teachers have pursued professional development in the UbD framework that reflects a continuous improvement approach to student achievement and teacher craft. The district has purchased a site license for several years with Eduplanet21 to align the curriculum and facilitate access to curricular materials district-wide. Among the attractive features of Eduplanet21 is the promise of greater transparency.

The school acknowledges a growing need for mental health awareness and training to meet its students' social and emotional needs. To support students experiencing academic and social-emotional challenges, the school has a student support team composed of guidance counselors, administrators, a school nurse, a 504 coordinator, the coordinator of special education, and the wellness director. Working closely with the district mental health committee, the school is developing and implementing a plan to reach all students who need support.

Commitment

In recent years, changes in staffing and leadership at the building and district levels have underscored the importance of identifying Priority Areas and adopting a shared vision of the graduate. Another staffing change is currently happening with the assistant superintendent in charge of curriculum leaving at the end of the year. However, the school is committed to aligning with the Standards for Accreditation and fulfilling its goals via the Priority Areas for Growth. Having developed the vision of the graduate, the school intends to move forward with the vital work of embedding these concepts into the curriculum and eventually impact instruction and assessment. Building leaders are committed to the recent initiatives by district administrators in adopting Understanding by Design as a curriculum framework and Universal Design for Learning as an instructional framework. However, some staff members are hesitant to make dynamic changes to their practice without proper professional development. Some teachers question the probable longevity of the proposed program changes based on past experiences of short-lived initiatives that ceased with the advent of personnel changes. While this certainly impacts the overall climate and culture at the school, curriculum revision using UbD and UDL as systematic approaches to improving curriculum and effective instructional practices has been initiated as a Priority Area. In connection with the revision of the curriculum using backward design, the initiative advocates the inclusion of units of study with guiding or essential questions integrating the vision of the graduate, followed by the need to develop common assessments and authentic performance tasks.

Students at the school report that the staff truly cares about their growth, development, and well-being, which is strongly reflected in the nurturing environment across the school. Students know the staff is genuinely concerned about their education and well-being. Many students speak of turning to staff for assistance with personal issues as well as academics, and they appreciate the support and follow-up they receive from counselors. There is a high degree of mutual respect and trust between students and their counselors and teachers. Above all, the school is committed to responding to learners and striving to meet their needs. The staff and the school community are committed to developing and using a growth mindset for students and adults. However, the specific terminology of a growth mindset is not necessarily used. The staff cultivates a culture of coaching, both in the teacher-evaluator relationship as well as the student-teacher context.

Competency

Building administrators and faculty are dedicated to helping students. They demonstrate the competency to make the necessary shifts to address most Priority Areas, underscored by the creation and implementation of the school growth plan. The already established educator evaluation rubric, following the Danielson model, provides evidence of competency in the professional culture. Informal walkthroughs and the cognitive coaching model demonstrate current practice in using data to inform instruction. The application process for placement in honors-level courses and the 8th to 9th grade transition process for identified students incorporates formal data analysis. In addition, the recertification portfolio requires educators to set goals, describe desired results for students, and present evidence of student learning integrated into an ongoing learning plan. However, a shared understanding of the vision of the graduate is needed to more comprehensively address the skills, knowledge, and dispositions that staff would like students to acquire. Shifting the focus to more student-centered, project-based learning that incorporates higher-order thinking skills will help learners better attain the school's vision of the graduate. Professional development in these areas is required to make this pedagogical shift and build competency. The work in progress on the other Priority Areas reflects the staff's competence to effect change. Professional learning regarding research-based student-centered instructional strategies will enhance teachers' practices. Professional learning regarding the effective use of technology as a tool to increase student engagement will further foster all educators' understanding of the initiatives and competency in implementing them.

Capacity

As a result of the conceptual understanding, commitment, and competency of those in the high school community, the foundation for the school's capacity for change is in place for most of the Priority Areas. Support from the board of education, central office staff, building administrators, and staff strengthens this capacity. All indicators suggest that the school community can persist in these areas with the personnel and assets already in place. The consistency and longevity of the department head team provide significant capacity to create and sustain meaningful change. The successful working relationship between the department heads and the building administrative team in developing and implementing the Priority Area initiatives is driving the process. This strong working relationship and commitment to the improvement of the school's Priority Areas fosters buy-in within their respective departments and across the school community. However, these initiatives will require funding for professional development and continued training to implement the growth plan effectively and to incorporate the vision of the graduate into the curriculum and students' daily experience. Although the district is working on a PreK-12 vision of a learner in response to the vision of the graduate developed at the school, there is concern that district initiatives may prove to supersede the initiatives at the high school, thereby slowing the momentum and growth that the school had made since the Collaborative Conference visit. However, the principal has a vision of the programmatic changes that need to be made. Future communication of those changes will help the school move forward with its improvement process, including a shared vision of what optimal learning looks like in the classroom, robust assessment strategies, research-based student-centered learning instructional practices, and tiered intervention strategies. The faculty is caring and dedicated, and their primary goals are to support their students and help them succeed. The shared understanding develops as the vision is implemented and the critical instructional requirements evolve among faculty and staff. If they become routine and consistent practices, then the capacity for school improvement and the ability to meet the needs of all students' will dramatically increase.

Commendations

Commendation

The safe, positive, respectful, and inclusive culture of the school

Commendation

The dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research and best practices used to develop the school's vision of the graduate

Commendation

The clear connection between the vision of the graduate and the school's growth plan

Commendation

The district purchase of Eduplanet21 curriculum software

Commendation

The commitment of staff to create curricula that emphasizes authentic learning and embeds the skills and competencies necessary to attain the school's vision of the graduate

Commendation

The range of timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies available for all students, including identified and at-risk students, that support each student's success and well-being

Commendation

The commitment of staff to learn and use tools and applications of technology in the classroom and the support provided by the district's IT staff in supporting the integration of technology across the school

Commendation

The culture of collaboration and innovation with technology fostered by both teachers and the district's technology coordinator

Commendation

The wide variety of in-home and in-school mental health support services available to students and families

Additional Recommendations

Recommendation

Ensure that staff members new to the school have a complete understanding of school and district initiatives and best instructional practices

Recommendation

Develop and implement a planned program of professional learning on research-based student-centered instructional practices that will ensure that all learners at all levels are active learners who regularly engage in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking

Recommendation

Ensure that all students at all levels engage in deliberately designed authentic learning and assessment experiences that are cognitively challenging and require learners to develop and exercise a full range of thinking skills and learning dispositions

Recommendation

Provide ongoing professional development on the effective use and integration of technology as a tool for learning and teaching

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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

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

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

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

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES
Commission on Public Schools

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

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

Roster of Team Members

Chair(s)

Chair: Mr. Paul MacMillan - New England Association of Schools & Colleges

Assistant Chair: Mrs. Mary Devaney - Wolcott High School

Team Members

David Hersey - Hollis Brookline High School

Laurie Melanson - Portsmouth High School

Kathleen Scholand - Farmington High School

Natalie Sears - Manchester High School Central