



NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
Commission on Public Schools

Director for Accreditation and School Improvement

ALYSON M. GEARY

781-425-7736 | ageary@neasc.org

Associate Directors for Accreditation and School Improvement:

CARL R. JOHNSON

781-425-7718

cjohnson@neasc.org

FRANCIS T. KENNEDY

781-425-7749

fkennedy@neasc.org

KATHLEEN A. MONTAGANO

781-425-7760

kmontagano@neasc.org

BRUCE R. SIEVERS

781-425-7716

bsievers@neasc.org

February 16, 2024

Laura Charette
Principal
Westport Middle High School
400 Old County Road
Westport, MA 02790

Dear Mrs. Charette:

On behalf of the Commission on Public Schools, I am pleased to submit the final version of the Collaborative Conference Visit Report, which you have discussed with the chair, Troy Hopkins, in its draft form.

This Collaborative Conference Visit Report reflects the findings of the school's Self-Reflection and those of the visiting team. It provides a blueprint for the faculty, administrators, and other officials to use to improve the quality of programs and services for the students of the school.

The Commission urges school officials to use the results of the Collaborative Conference Visit Report as well as the school's identified priority areas for growth to draft a school growth and improvement plan and to review and implement the findings of the Self-Reflection and valid recommendations identified in the Collaborative Conference Visit Report. The faculty, school board, and superintendent should be apprised by the building administrators yearly of progress made in addressing visiting team recommendations.

I would like to commend you for your school's dedication to continuous improvement through the NEASC Accreditation process. Please feel free to contact me with questions or concerns as they arise.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen A. Montagano". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kathleen A. Montagano

KAM/as

cc: Thomas F Aubin, Superintendent, Westport Community Schools

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

Commission on Public Schools



**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION
OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

Commission on Public Schools

**Report of the Visiting Team for
Westport Middle High School**

Westport, MA

12-05-2023 - 12-06-2023

**Mr. Troy Hopkins, Chair
Laura Charette, Principal**

School and Community Summary

School and Community Summary

Westport is located approximately 62 miles south of Boston, Massachusetts. As of the 2022 Census, Westport was home to just over 16,400 residents. Westport is a community consisting of many small businesses, both seasonal and year-round, and numerous working farms.

The median income of Westport residents is just above \$85,000 per year. Approximately 30.8 percent of Westport residents hold a Bachelor's degree or higher.

According to data from the 2022-2023 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) district profile, 34.5 percent of families attending the Westport Community Schools are considered economically disadvantaged.

The Westport Community Schools consists of three schools. A primary school serves pre-K and kindergarten, one elementary school serves students in grades 1-4, and one combined middle-high school houses grades 5-12. Students from Westport can enroll in a technical high school for grades 9-12. Approximately 30 students leave after grade 8.

Enrollment in the Westport Community Schools has been increasing. Three years ago, the district had 1,355 students enrolled. In the 2023 school year, Westport Community Schools served 1,446 students.

The average per pupil cost is \$17,050, below the state average of approximately \$19,000. The proposed fiscal year 2024 school department budget is \$23,456,284. The school budget is approximately 47 percent of the Town of Westport's budget.

The drop-out rate in 2022 was 2.2 percent. The four-year adjusted graduation rate for 2022 was 91.2 percent. The student attendance rate for the 2022-2023 school year was 93.6 percent. Seventy-one percent of students from the Class of 2023 continued their education after graduation at a two- or four-year college. Three percent enrolled in a trade or vocational program, 1 percent enlisted in the military, and 21 percent entered the workforce.

Westport Community Schools has business relationships with Lee's Market, a local grocery store, and Bay Coast Bank. Lee's supports students with employment opportunities and provides items for many events, such as the senior dinner, Credit for Life, and Career Fair. Bay Coast Bank has supported the senior dinner since its inception in 2020. Westport has a long-standing relationship with Mass Hire in Fall River. They provide training for the work-study and internship programs, assist in organizing the Career Fair, and organize industry tours. This past year, Long Moving Company provided work-study and internships. Specht Physical Therapy of Swansea, MA, provides internship opportunities for students interested in physical therapy. Westport has partnerships with the University of Massachusetts (UMASS)-Dartmouth, Massachusetts Maritime Academy, and Bristol Community College, which provide opportunities for students to take dual enrollment courses.

Core Values, Beliefs, and Vision of the Graduate

We believe

- All students can learn.
- Students learn best in a safe, supportive and equitable environment.
- Tolerance of individual differences and cooperative resolution of conflicts create a climate of respect.
- Inquiry and collaboration help students actively engage in the curriculum.
- Essential understanding is demonstrated through effective communication.

- Personal responsibility for behavior and learning leads to success.
- Collaboration among all stakeholders maximizes achievement.

Expectations for Student Learning

Academic

- All students acquire, integrate and apply enduring understandings, knowledge and skills.
- All students read, write and communicate effectively.
- All students use higher order thinking skills to solve complex problems.
- All students use media and technology effectively.
- All students study, research and work independently and collaboratively.

Social

- All students demonstrate personal and social responsibility.

Civic

- All students demonstrate civic responsibility.

Vision of the Graduate

W Write and communicate effectively

I Imagine, create, and problem-solve

L Learn through their whole lives

D Dedicate everything to excellence

C Connect, collaborate, and civically engage

A Adapt to change and challenges

T Take intellectual initiative

S Support others

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 that seek voluntary affiliation.

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

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

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

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit - The School Self-Reflection

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

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

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

The Process Used by the Visiting Team

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

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

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

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

Foundational Element Ratings

Foundational Element Ratings

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

Foundational Element 1.1a - Learning Culture

Narrative

The Westport Middle High School community purposefully provides a safe environment supporting the teaching and learning between students and staff, and the safety of visitors. Over 81 percent of students and 93.5 percent of staff agree they feel safe in the school. The constant presence of a school resource officer enhances the safety of the school. The school firmly maintains policies and procedures to ensure safety. For example, the school building is always locked, visitors must identify themselves before gaining entry, multiple internal and external cameras monitor the school, and emergency drills are practiced with well-organized and well-known procedures. Students feel physically and emotionally safe and have someone they can talk to in the school community. However, 38.2 percent of students agree people treat students from different backgrounds with respect some of the time or less. The school has policies and processes designed to ensure the safety of learners and adults. Westport Middle High School follows all policies that ensure safety, like the bullying and harassment policies outlined in the student handbook code of conduct and mandated by the school committee.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 1.2a - Learning Culture

Narrative

Westport Middle High School has a written document describing its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate. Various stakeholders are currently providing feedback on the vision of the graduate, and the school council has discussed implementation at various meetings. A citizenship rubric and other school-wide rubrics aligned with the vision of the graduate are used to measure student attainment of the expectations, which include write and communicate effectively, imaginatively and creatively problem-solve, learn through one's whole life, dedicate to excellence in all endeavors, connect and collaborate with others, adapt to change and challenge, take initiative in one's learning, and support others.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 2.2a - Student Learning

Narrative

The school has yet to have a complete written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments across the school. Several departments have curriculum documents in common formats for many courses, including guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, and skills, and some assessment strategies; however, instructional strategies have yet to be documented in all curricula.

Rating

Does Not Meet the Standard

Foundational Element 3.1a - Professional Practices

Narrative

Westport Middle High School has a current school improvement plan. The plan includes three specific goals: (1) complete common final exams for UbD Stage 2 assessment and complete the learning plan per unit for UbD Stage 3 instruction, (2) promote positive intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skill development through social-emotional lessons within HR groups, (3) promote positive intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skill development through the introduction of RULER. Each goal includes action steps, resources, outputs, outcomes, assigned responsibility, and a timeline. The school has identified draft priority areas for the next version of the school improvement plan, which aligns with these goals. The school improvement plan informs decision-making in the school based on the school's priorities.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 4.1a - Learning Support

Narrative

The school has intervention strategies designed to support learners. There is an appropriate range of intervention strategies. For example, academic support classes are available to students who need support with core content classes. One school counselor oversees and serves students in grades eight through ten, transitions them to high school, and ensures they receive all the support needed. The school has a process to identify and refer students who need additional assistance beyond extra help from the classroom teacher. However, the process has yet to be well-documented. A team of building administrators, school counselors, school adjustment counselors, and special education teachers meet regularly to discuss students needing support. Teachers can refer students through the response to intervention (RTI) process or weekly meetings with school counselors. Individual plans are created for students using the district's comprehensive accommodation plan as a starting point.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 5.1a - Learning Resources

Narrative

The school site and plant support the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services. A new school building and facilities opened for the 2021-2022 school year. The building and facilities ensure a safe, secure, healthy environment for students and adults. The school building and facilities are meticulously clean and well-maintained. The building and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and comply with local fire, health, and safety regulations.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Standard 1 - Learning Culture

Narrative

The school community has a safe, positive, respectful, and inclusive culture in place that, in some areas, ensures equity and honors diversity in identity and thought. There is a strong sense of caring about all students from teachers involved in ensuring their success. According to the survey, 81.5 percent of students and 93.5 percent of faculty feel safe all or most of the time. Protocols such as locking doors and using the Raptor software to identify and admit visitors help ensure the physical safety of staff and students. Students feel physically and emotionally safe and have someone they can talk to in the school community. However, 38.2 percent of students agree people treat students from different backgrounds with respect only some of the time or less. Some displays celebrate other cultures and identities, and teachers sometimes have group or one-on-one conversations with students to discuss individuality among students. The school plans to introduce a Unified Sports program beginning in the spring of 2024. Various extracurricular activities support student interests and involvement, including the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA), student council, art club, International Exchange Club, pep band, and athletic teams. However, there is a perception in the school community that sports receive greater support and recognition than arts programs, creating a sense of inequity.

The school's core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate have yet to drive student learning, professional practices, learning support, and the provision and allocation of learning resources. The school's mission statement, which articulates its core values and beliefs about learning, was revised in October 2022, and the vision of the graduate was recently adopted through a process that involved staff members, students, parents, and community members. The school community is in the early stages of implementing the vision of the graduate. The school is beginning to address ensuring core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate are actively reflected in the school culture and drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom.

The school community is developing plans to take 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. Students in grades five through eight participate in a monthly advisory program, where advisory teachers implement an emotional intelligence curriculum to support students' social and emotional learning. The advisory allows students to develop a strong connection with their homeroom teacher and is a forum to voice their opinions about the school culture and programming. There are plans to expand this to students in academic support and focus classes later this year and to ninth grade next year. All students who require academic support classes have access regardless of whether they have a plan that requires it. Through coursework, extracurricular opportunities, assemblies, and the internship program, the school is focused on providing a balance of academic, social, and civic opportunities to meet the needs of diverse learners.

The school community's professional culture is generally committed to continuous improvement through the use of research, collaborative learning, innovation, and reflection. Much change has occurred in the past few years, from block scheduling to a six-day rotation, adopting *Understanding by Design* templates for curriculum writing, combining the middle school and the high school into one school, and creating weekly common planning time for teams. Professional development is provided for teachers; however, the focus of these sessions has often been general and not applicable to the current needs of all teachers.

The school's culture frequently promotes intellectual risk-taking and personal and professional growth. Teachers can experiment with lesson components such as instructional techniques, grouping strategies, and assignments. The school offers students credit recovery possibilities through the after-school resiliency program and summer school. Students are encouraged to revise assignments and improve their work, but credit for these efforts is determined by individual teachers and not successful completion of mastery of the standard. All students are required to complete a senior capstone project in English, allowing them to explore topics of personal interest and present their findings. The internship program supports student interests and learning beyond the classroom.

The school is developing an inclusive definition of leadership, providing school leaders with the authority and responsibility to improve student learning. Budget often drives the decision-making for the district, with mandated health and safety measures taking priority over other initiatives the schools need to undertake. Nearly 96 percent

of teachers agree that they influence curriculum creation, and 87.5 percent feel empowered to select classroom instructional materials. Teachers have some control over making decisions in the school by talking to administrators but have little input at the district level. Just over 67 percent of students agree they are given essential leadership opportunities at the school. The school community ensures that the building principal is given appropriate authority to lead the school and make decisions; however, funding is not always available for the school's identified needs to ensure the principal's vision comes to fruition.

The school culture often fosters civic engagement and social and personal responsibility. Advocates class students work with special needs students who exemplify extraordinary leadership (STEEL), notably helping in school and the community. The internship program has helped connect the community and the school positively. More than 91 percent of parents agree that students are taught to take responsibility for their actions. Community service hours are a graduation requirement. The school has a citizenship rubric; however, there is no formal mechanism to measure and communicate the achievement of this standard to students and families.

Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- classroom observations
- NEASC survey
- parents
- school support staff
- self-reflection
- students
- teachers

Standard 2 - Student Learning

Narrative

The school has a vision of the graduate that includes the attainment of transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success; however, the school has yet to have a process for providing feedback to learners and their families on each learner's progress in achieving this vision or an annual report on whole-school progress toward learner achievement of the vision of the graduate. The school's vision of the graduate embraces the wildcat mascot and reflects aspirations beyond the four walls of the school house, including dispositions necessary for future success. Nearly half of the faculty agree that they are somewhat, slightly, or not familiar at all with the vision of the graduate. The vision has been reviewed with all staff members; however, it was initially developed by and for the high school before the middle and high schools merged. The vision of the graduate has yet to be embedded into curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices across the school. Because the vision of the graduate has yet to be known by all, the school has yet to create a formal process to assess and communicate individual learner and whole-school progress toward achieving the vision of a graduate.

The school has yet to have a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments that includes units of study with guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, skills, instructional strategies, and assessment practices and integrates the school's vision of the graduate. There is a written curriculum in a consistent format for many courses in many departments; however, not all written curricula include all of the elements. The vision of the graduate has yet to be integrated. The school uses Google Drive to house the curricula by department, and curriculum maps are consistently written using the Understanding by Design (UbD) template. This system of organizing the curricula is a notable improvement and allows for quick and easy access and use. In recent years, much effort has been spent on stage 1, identifying desired results, and stage 2, determining acceptable evidence of the curriculum maps. Stage 3, the learning plan, is still being developed for most courses. As the school has experienced higher-than-expected teacher turnover in recent years, it is important to have a consistent learning plan in all subject areas to minimize the challenge of staff transitions. As the school finalizes the curriculum plans, there will be an opportunity to integrate the school's vision of the graduate.

Curriculum sometimes ensures that learners demonstrate a depth of understanding over a breadth of knowledge. The district's strategic plan emphasizes personalized learning and hands-on instruction; however, these practices have yet to be pervasive across the school. There has been a significant effort to create opportunities for personalized learning and hands-on instruction. For example, zSpace laptops, state-of-the-art instruments, can detect users' eye movements and provide full three-dimensional views of objects that the user can move and manipulate. The zSpace laptops are new to the school and allow students to apply their knowledge and skills to authentic tasks. The school participates in several off-campus field trips, including visits to Westport Watershed Alliance and Horseneck Beach. High school students can work with several philanthropic organizations and participate in internship and work-study programs.

Some instructional practices are designed to meet the learning needs of students. In a ninth-grade biology class, some students work independently on a lab assignment; others engage in small groups to complete the assignment. Some middle-grade teachers differentiate, individualize, or personalize learning; however, this has yet to be pervasive across the school, particularly in some leveled courses that are not advanced. Some tiered instruction is used. For example, fifth-grade students regularly use an electronic math intervention program. The teacher skillfully uses guiding questions in an algebra class to support students' knowledge acquisition for polynomial long division. Some teachers incorporate formative assessment to adjust instruction; for example, teachers circulate and provide feedback as students work on assignments. Grouping strategies are occasionally used during class instruction; most students are seated in traditional rows. Beginning in the seventh grade, students can access leveled math classes, and several honors and advanced placement courses are available to students in the upper grades. Students can move into more advanced math pathways but must meet specific criteria. The school provides opportunities for students to accelerate their learning and allows for various entry points into the advanced courses. However, most instructional practices have yet to be designed to meet the learning needs of each student or be embedded consistently throughout the school; there is heavy reliance on worksheets. Students, by and large, have the same learning experience in each class, regardless of their

learning needs.

Some students are active learners who have opportunities to lead their own learning. In a ninth-grade world history class, students select from project options and work individually, with a partner, or in a group to demonstrate their learning. Each assignment has a different rubric, but all projects must have three reliable resources. In a high school art class, students create a sculpture of their choosing, provided it fits within the broad assigned theme. Students in a fifth-grade science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) class design a racer and experiment throughout the design process. Juniors and seniors who meet eligibility criteria can choose up to two dual enrollment courses per semester for school and college credit. Juniors and seniors can participate in off-campus internships. In some subject areas, students have access to various elective offerings. For example, students interested in art can pursue sculpture and painting or a drawing class. However, personalized, relevant, and authentic learning that fosters student agency has yet to be embedded into school-wide instructional practices.

Learners sometimes engage in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills. In a biology class, students discover the relationship between distance and intensity of light on the rate of photosynthesis in a virtual lab. In a seventh-grade science class, students match energy transformations to different scenarios by working with a partner to pair pieces of paper. In an eleventh-grade US History class, students review a passage by President Polk and answer questions about Polk's explanation of the Mexican cession. Ultimately, students have to determine the legitimacy of Polk's justification of the war with Mexico by determining if Polk potentially misled people into supporting the war. In a biology class, a virtual lab allows students to move numbers and try to manipulate variables to learn about photosynthesis. In an eighth-grade English language arts (ELA) class, students are called upon to ask questions and provide reasoning about their answers. Seniors complete a capstone project in ELA that invites them to generate practical solutions to societal challenges based on an analysis of data, research, and interviews. However, inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking have yet to be used pervasively across the school.

Learners demonstrate their learning through a variety of assessment strategies that inform classroom instruction and curriculum. Teachers use various formative assessment strategies to gather information about student learning, such as warm-ups, exit tickets, online programs, small group assignments, turn and talk, traditional quizzes, and Socratic seminars. For example, in an eighth-grade science class, students demonstrate their learning by completing an exit ticket at the end of class. Summative assessments include traditional tests, presentations, research projects, and performance-based assessments. There are some common assessments, but these have yet to be developed for all classes. Some students are provided with specific and measurable criteria for success before assessments. For example, there are some departmental common rubrics, and some teachers provide exemplars. Some students have opportunities to revise their work. In an eighth-grade math class, students correct a quiz on linear equations and graphing to gain additional credit. In a sixth-grade science class, the teacher leads a review of the correct answers to a quiz. In a fifth-grade STEAM class, students demonstrate their learning by constructing pizza box racers.

Some learners have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning, receive corrective feedback, and use the feedback meaningfully to support their learning. Teacher feedback is provided in several ways, such as verbal, written, and digital, through various forms or programs that provide students feedback on their answers and occasional peer reviews. In many classes, mostly middle-level, students can do some form of make-up work to improve their grades. Sometimes, the initial grade must be below a certain threshold to be eligible for additional credit. In some classes, students are required to provide correct answers to initial problems to receive credit, but there has yet to be a consistent system for learning and re-assessment; students attempt the same problems and hope for a correct answer. Opportunities for students to revise and improve work are not widely available at the high school. While teachers are frequently available for additional help beyond class time, students would benefit from a consistent approach to the revision process that is available to all students.

Learners use technology across curricular areas to support, enhance, and demonstrate their learning inconsistently. Students use Google Classroom to access classwork. A fifth-grade career readiness class creates Google Slides. Sixth-grade math students regularly use ST Math, an online program, and the school uses iReady math. Ninth-grade biology students use an interactive photosynthesis simulator to run simulations. English language arts uses some online programs for learning. All students and faculty have access to the Rosetta Stone for learning other languages. The z-Space computers allow students to participate in various high-end vocational technical programming.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-reflection
- students
- teachers

Standard 3 - Professional Practices

Narrative

The community and school district engage all stakeholders in the development and implementation of a school improvement plan. The plan includes three goals: (1) complete common final exams for UbD Stage 2, assessment, and complete the learning plan per unit for UbD Stage 3, instruction; (2) promote positive intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skill development through social-emotional lessons within homeroom groups; (3) promote positive intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skill development by introducing RULER. The improvement plan concisely outlines the steps the school plans to take this school year. A list of required resources, outcomes, responsibilities, and a target completion date accompanies each step. The plan was created with the perspectives of the school community in mind. It aligns closely with the district's priorities. The plan strives to address the Standards for Accreditation, and the school intends to update the plan to address the identified priority areas. Staff members know the plan and use it to guide decision-making.

Educators regularly engage in ongoing reflection, formal and informal collaboration, and professional development to improve student learning and well-being. Teachers regularly meet with one another to discuss lessons and curricula. Rooms and offices are designed to enhance collaboration, and teachers have common planning time. The high school teachers meet once in a six-day cycle, and the middle school teachers meet more frequently. However, lack of leadership for the meetings by department or other organizational plan sometimes makes formal collaboration challenging. Significant time is dedicated to formal and informal professional development, and the school is working on improving the implementation of high-yield instructional practices. Educators engage in formal professional development through graduate courses and or other workshops provided in and outside the district. The district provides various professional learning community (PLC) opportunities that meet once per month, where topics include curriculum, social-emotional strategies, book clubs, and Socratic seminars. Teachers select PLCs of interest to them. These support systems have enabled some teachers to lead effective classroom instruction. However, the structure leaves some teachers as the only knowledgeable staff member in their course. The staff has many opportunities to collaborate with coworkers, administrators, and other community members. Educators engage in supervision and evaluation and reflect on their performance through the teacher evaluation system. Teachers self-assess and develop a student learning goal and professional practice goal. The student learning goal requires analyzing student achievement data to promote teacher reflection and instructional improvement. Some teachers reflect upon and respond to feedback from classroom observation report recommendations.

Educators sometimes examine evidence of student learning and well-being to improve curriculum, instruction, assessment practices, and programs and services. With the recent schedule change that allows common planning time, teachers have opportunities to work collaboratively to review data and improve instruction. Most data analysis is limited to departmental analysis of Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) data or AP data. The school uses the digital software iReady to assess students' skill levels, and the software can assess individual student needs; however, teachers have yet to use iReady data to target student needs. The school has some common assessments and plans to develop more. Most teachers have yet to elicit student feedback to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The school plans to administer an anonymous survey to collect data and support the implementation of the RULER program.

Collaborative structures and processes have yet to fully support the coordination and implementation of curriculum. The written curriculum is still being developed. The district's curriculum coordinator assists teachers with writing and has developed positive relationships with the faculty and administrators; however, there is no departmental curriculum leadership, which sometimes hinders teachers' efforts. The culture of each department varies, resulting in inconsistency in curriculum development. Teachers are willing and eager to help their coworkers with curriculum design through common planning time and other professional development opportunities. Teachers have built-in time to meet with teachers outside of their department to discuss curriculum during professional learning community (PLC) meetings. The school has yet to develop methods to ensure alignment among the written, taught, and learned curriculum based on data or other methods; however, administrators review the curriculum when completing observations.

Some school-wide organizational practices are designed to meet the learning needs of each student. Overall, the school has a variety of programs that meet the needs of students; however, according to the survey, 40 percent of students agree their classes are challenging. The high school offers AP, honors, and college prep classes, and there are opportunities for high school students to challenge themselves through dual enrollment at community colleges. Seventh and eighth-grade math classes are leveled; other classes are heterogeneously grouped, providing some opportunities to learn from students different from them. The school is inclusive by integrating special education students and English learners into classes wherever possible and supporting them to be successful.

Educators develop productive student, family, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support learning. Students can connect with external organizations through dual enrollment at the University of Massachusetts (UMASS)-Dartmouth, Massachusetts Maritime Academy, and Bristol Community College. Students connect with businesses or community organizations such as work-study and internships. Because Westport is a coastal town, the school partnered with Dharma Voyage, a community rowing organization, to offer a boatbuilding course. The school counseling staff works diligently and closely to help students prepare for college. College representatives are invited to help students secure higher education opportunities. Teachers develop relationships with parents and guardians through parent-teacher conferences and other school events to which parents are invited, such as orientation and transition, financial aid nights, and award and scholarship activities. Some parents are school council members. The school is supported by parent and community organizations such as the parent-teacher organization (PTO), Westport Educational Foundation (WEF), Westport Athletic Boosters (WAB), and Westport Music Boosters.

Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- classroom observations
- facility tour
- NEASC survey
- school leadership
- students
- teacher interview
- teachers

Standard 4 - Learning Support

Narrative

Many students receive appropriate intervention strategies to support their academic, social, and emotional success. To further help students, the school is improving its approach to Response to Intervention (RTI) to support students with identified emotional impairments and implementing a formal mechanism to transition students returning to school from extended absences. A tiered system of support is used for students needing assistance. For students not meeting with success after Tier 1 strategies are employed, Tier 2 interventions such as academic support, targeted reading intervention, and peer tutoring are used. The academic support class provides interventions for students needing additional assistance with coursework. Students in grades five through eight participate in a monthly advisory program. Advisors are implementing a social-emotional curriculum from Yale, RULER, to support students. The school hopes to extend the advisory into grades nine through twelve. High school students who fail to earn credit in a course can enroll in the resiliency school, an in-person credit recovery program that runs after school from February to May. High school students can enroll in a more traditional summer school to earn back credit; middle school students can enroll in enrichment or remediation. When teachers have concerns about students, they bring them to the school counselor, who works with the assistant principal to schedule an RTI meeting. The student-support team meets biweekly to discuss specific student concerns and to action plan for remediation; the support team is composed of building administrators, guidance counselors, adjustment counselors, and the athletic/activities director.

Westport Middle High School students receive counseling services that meet their personal, social, emotional, academic, career, and college counseling needs from adequate, certified/licensed personnel. There are three school counselors, three school adjustment counselors, and one administrative assistant. The school counselors have approximately 175-250 students, and the school adjustment counselors have about 250-315 students. The school counseling department has curriculum guides for grades 9-12 and a month-by-month list of instructional topics. In grades 5 through 12, students engage with their counselor individually and in small groups. Students take six classes and work closely with their school counselor to develop a schedule best suited to their current and future planning. School counselors offer effective, proactive support for students, especially post-graduation planning. School adjustment counselors conduct home visits when students struggle to attend school or school attendance is impossible.

All students receive health services that ensure their physical and emotional well-being from adequate, certified/licensed personnel. There are two full-time certified registered nurses. Students and families feel very supported by the school nurses. The nurses often provide a safe and welcoming space for students struggling to regulate their emotions during the school day or those needing a quick therapeutic break. Nurses conduct preventative health screenings, administer medication, and maintain students' health history. The nurses facilitate postural, hearing, vision, and BMI assessments. They conduct screening, brief intervention, and referral for treatment (SBIRT) interviews. The health office includes an isolation room where students with potentially contagious ailments can receive support. The nurses attend several student support meetings, such as the biweekly meeting of the counselors and administrators, the RTI meetings, and 504/IEP meetings as necessary. Nurses inform the faculty about health-related concerns for students, such as allergies or health-related impairments. A nurse supports the annual eighth-grade field trip to Washington, D.C., and frequently attends other field trips, including international trips, to provide health-related support for students.

Students receive library/information services that generally support their learning from adequate, certified/licensed personnel. The library media center is staffed full-time by a certified media center specialist and is regularly accessible to students from 7:15 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. The library media specialist has yet to fully engage in implementing the school's curriculum and instructional practices due to lack of time. Sometimes, the media specialist is assigned to teach some classes. The library media specialist pushes into classes to support students' independent research projects in the 12th grade, and sometimes teachers bring classes to the library. The library media specialist is exploring ways to help students access the curriculum, especially in grades 5-12 history classes and grades 5-8. The library media specialist can explore avenues of support for students engaging in the new state-mandated civics projects. Students, especially high school students, access the media center when enrolled in online or dual enrollment programs, and the library media specialist serves as the teacher of record for these offerings. The media center specialist maintains classroom supplies and equipment to

support curriculum projects such as 3D printing, die cutting, laminating, and large-format printing. The media center includes many multimodal tools to support instruction with digital resources such as films, documentaries, and Noodletools. The extensive library collection includes non-fiction books, resource texts for research, and access to a statewide database system with many academic research articles and sources. The vast literature collection, updated regularly, supports the English course curricula and independent reading. The library media center is a welcoming space prominently featured in the building design by its proximity to the main entrance and position between the middle and high schools. The Westport Public Library is conveniently adjacent to the Westport Middle High School, and the two organizations are developing an ongoing relationship to support students.

Identified English language learners and students with special needs and 504 plans receive most of the appropriate programming and services to support their learning from adequate, certified/licensed personnel. Two full-time teachers service English language learners (ELLs) across the district, and some teachers have a Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) endorsement. The faculty across the district has access to the Language Line to provide immediate interpreter services to facilitate conversations or meetings. The district subscribes to a service from the University of Massachusetts (UMASS)-Amherst to assist with translating documents. Students, faculty, and families can access the Rosetta Stone for language learning. Various supports are available to special needs students to align with their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). The school has nine special education inclusion teachers, four sub-separate special needs teachers, one speech and language pathologist, one occupational therapist, one special education coordinator, and teaching assistants. The co-teaching model supports students with content-specific disabilities in the general education classroom. Inclusion students may also receive pull-out services. The school offers academic support classes to general education students and students receiving special education services. For students with targeted academic or executive functioning goals, focus classes taught by a special education teacher support students in making progress toward their goals. Students in one of the sub-separate programs take math, reading, pre-vocational classes, and electives such as physical education, art, and music and participate in school-based internships. Three of the subseparate teachers support resource rooms. Three adjustment counselors support students with social-emotional goals on their IEPs. The school psychologist has no student caseload and is primarily responsible for special education testing. The school counselors serve as the 504 case managers, including chairing annual reviews of 504 plans and writing new and updated student plans. Teachers provide weekly updates on student progress.

Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- classroom observations
- community members
- facility tour
- NEASC survey
- parents
- school leadership
- school support staff
- self-reflection
- students

Standard 5 - Learning Resources

Narrative

The community and district provide school buildings and facilities that support the delivery of high-quality curriculum, programs, and services. The school's new building welcomed students and staff at the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year. The building ensures a safe, secure, healthy environment that supports the student body and is adequately sized for the school community. Doors are always locked, and staff has access cards to enter. All entrances to the building are locked at all times. Visitors must buzz in outside the school and speak with an administrative assistant to enter the security vestibule before being granted access to the school. Cameras are located in various places. The school houses students in grades 5-12, with one side of the building dedicated to middle school and the other to the high school; however, with the number of classes and students, some teachers must share classroom space. The facility provides appropriate spaces to support student learning and the curriculum. Classrooms are adequately sized and have furniture that can be adjusted for instruction. Because the school is new, science labs are sufficiently sized and have new equipment to support the curriculum. The gymnasium, cafeteria, auditorium, and library media center are in the center of the school and shared, mostly at separate times during the day. The large gymnasium can be divided to accommodate middle and high school students simultaneously. Several modern spaces support the practice and acquisition of collaboration skills, an element of the school's vision of the graduate. A cohort commons is a space at the end of each corridor with a whiteboard and room for a small group of students. Outdoor courtyard areas are used for instruction and group work. A fitness center, a walking track, and a television studio support the delivery of the curriculum. Gender-neutral restrooms are available for students and staff. Seven custodians keep the school clean and well-maintained. Two work during the school day, four work evenings, and one works between the day and night shifts. All mechanical systems are serviced regularly. The director of facilities monitors required inspections, such as the board of health, Westport Fire Department, building, boiler, Department of Environmental Protection, and others. The school meets all applicable federal and state laws and complies with local fire, health, and safety regulations.

The community and district's governing body provide mostly adequate time and reliable financial resources to enable research-based instruction, professional growth, and the development, implementation, and improvement of school programs and services. The schedule provides common planning time for teachers in the same department or grade level to meet formally once each week to support research-based instruction, professional collaboration among educators, the learning needs of all students, and student programs and services; however, often this is not enough time to collaborate or examine data to make improvements. During the monthly faculty meeting, teachers review teaching practices, such as the next month's advisory activity. Teachers engage in two full and five half days of professional development during the school year. Professional development is offered on topics like culturally responsive teaching, curriculum development, or technology integration. Teachers select a professional learning community to attend, resulting in more self-directed or small group-directed learning opportunities. Westport Community Schools encourages and pays for teachers to pursue career-advancing professional development, such as taking graduate courses, becoming qualified to teach advanced placement courses, or attending conferences, such as MassCUE. Overall, the district and school provide mostly adequate time and resources for professional development, evaluation and revision of the curriculum, and improvement of instruction using assessment results and current research. Teachers are willing to work on the curriculum as time permits.

The community and the district's governing body mostly provide adequate and dependable funding to fully implement the curriculum, including co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. The budget is supplemented through grants and donations. Field trips and standardized test preparation sessions are funded through the parent-teacher organization (PTO) and Westport Education Foundation (WEF). Town funding supports a wide range of school programs and services, such as AP and dual enrollment courses, internships, work-study opportunities, unique courses that align with student interests, many electives in various content areas, clubs, and athletics. However, there has yet to be enough funding to expand extracurricular activities and athletics. Professional and support staff are sufficient to implement the curriculum and support teaching and learning. Class size and teacher load are appropriate. The new school has sufficient equipment and technology. The science labs and a television studio have up-to-date equipment that supports student learning and interests.

The district made a significant investment in an abundance and variety of technology, and 95 percent of teachers agree they have access to the technology needed to support student learning. Classrooms have interactive whiteboards and televisions. Teachers are given laptops, and students have 1:1 Chromebooks. Students have access to 3D printers. The technology department includes the director of technology and four technology support specialists who efficiently maintain and support the technology equipment and needs of students and staff. The district reviews the technology budget annually and allocates funding for technology repair and future expansion, including new classroom hardware and software to support the curriculum. Resources to support library services and information technology are mostly sufficient for materials; however, the media specialist teaches and is not always available to support students and staff or support the curriculum more fully. Over 91 percent of students and 70 percent of faculty agree they have access to all the learning or instructional materials they need.

The school/district have short-term and long-term plans to address the capital and maintenance needs of its building and facilities. The director of facilities directs in-house staff and contracted vendors to implement an annual maintenance schedule and make necessary repairs to ensure the campus is clean, safe, and secure. The supervisor of custodians works with the director of facilities to oversee custodians and services. The Westport Middle High School leadership team and central office administrators regularly examine data to assess future building and facilities needs. Most importantly, enrollment data, predictions, and up-to-date educational programming and teaching practices are used to determine future needs, including staffing. Decision-making about capital needs begins with a discussion between school and district leaders. Proposed ideas are prioritized and submitted to the Town of Westport Capital Improvement Planning Committee, which identifies the projects for the following year. The district maintains a technology plan as required by the state.

The school has extensive infrastructure and protocols in place to ensure effective responses in crisis situations. A school resource office is present in the building. All staff are trained in alert, lockdown, inform, counter, and evacuate (ALICE), and the school practices these and other emergency drills during the year. Emergency procedures describing responses for various situations are documented in a book and located in each classroom. The school nurse and building leadership update a medical response plan annually. The plan contains a current list of all staff trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), automated external defibrillation (AED), and first aid. The crisis team consists of school leaders, nurses, teachers, and office staff. The crisis team meets periodically to review and revise crisis protocols. The school and district leadership team have a positive working relationship with and consult the Westport Police and Fire Departments about safety procedures and emergency drills regularly. A school resource officer is assigned to the school. The safety committee reviews and revises the Emergency Operations Plan annually to provide safe schools across the district.

Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- facility tour
- NEASC survey
- self-reflection
- students
- teachers

Priority Areas

Priority Area

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

Priority Area #1 Goal Statement: The school will complete a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments that includes units of study with guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, skills, instructional strategies, and assessment practices, and integrates the school's vision of the graduate. (2.2, 2.2a, 2.3)

School Response

Complete the curriculum for use as a living document and meet Foundational Element 2.2a.

Visiting Team Response

The curriculum should be aligned with the vision of the graduate and include assessment practices and instructional strategies that enable students to attain the transferable skills identified in the vision of the graduate.

Suggested action steps

- Complete the curriculum for all courses in all departments using the district's adopted Understanding by Design template
- Ensure all curricula contain guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, skills, instructional strategies, and assessment practices, particularly deep understanding through discipline-specific higher order thinking, project-based learning, authentic learning experiences, and interdisciplinary learning
- Incorporate the vision of the graduate into curriculum

Priority Area

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

Priority Area #2 Goal Statement: The school will ensure the vision of the graduate is known and understood by all members of the school community and develop a process to assess and communicate individual and whole-school progress toward achieving the vision of a graduate. (1.2a, 2.1, 3.1)

School Response

This goal is to finalize, codify, and share the vision of the graduate in ways that all stakeholders understand, offering professional development so staff can explore how their curricula align with the transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for success, and creating lessons where students can see how the vision of the graduate is embedded in everything they do.

Visiting Team Response

The vision of the graduate should drive the teaching and learning in the school. To make this a consistent reality, rubrics need to be developed for students to know the expectations and for faculty to be able to measure students' acquisition of the transferable skills of the vision of the graduate. The faculty will need to align these rubrics with their curricula and implement them with students in their departments and courses.

Suggested Action Steps

- Develop and implement a plan to ensure that the transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success contained within the vision of a graduate are well-supported, known, and understood by the school community
- Define the transferable skills by specific and measurable criteria for success
- Develop and define the opportunities for students to attain the vision of a graduate
- Embed the the vision of the graduate into curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices
- Develop and implement a formal process to assess and communicate individual learner progress toward achieving the school's vision of the graduate
- Develop an annual report on whole-school progress toward learner achievement of the vision of the graduate

Priority Area

The Collaborative Conference visiting team recommends a modification to the Priority Area identified by the school.

Original Priority Area #3 Goal Statement: Add new programs and modify the existing programming and systems designed to support students with social and emotional disabilities. (2.4, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2)

Revised Priority Area #3 Goal Statement: The school will provide a range of timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies that meets the academic, social, and emotional needs of all students and create a formal, defined process to identify and refer students who need additional assistance. (1.3, 2.4, 4.1, 4.2)

School Response

Add new programs and modify the existing programming and systems to support students with social and emotional disabilities. There is a need to implement a therapeutic classroom and revisit our multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) framework to ensure the individual learning needs of all students are met. MTSS will provide a framework for teachers as they work to differentiate instruction and assessment strategies to support a wide range of learners. The MTSS framework will help improve Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions for students struggling academically, socially, and emotionally.

Visiting Team Response

As written, the original goal would likely be the work of only the mental health professionals. The school Response to Intervention (RTI) is in place. By making the goal broader, the school will enlist all faculty and staff to meet the needs of all students in academic, social, and emotional areas. The visiting team supports the school's response.

Suggested Action Steps

- Design, document, and communicate a comprehensive school-wide intervention system that meets the academic, social, and emotional needs of all students
- Develop timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies
- Consider a social-emotional curriculum and how that curriculum would be delivered
- Ensure sufficient services and staffing to address academic, social, and emotional needs
- Provide a formal, defined process to identify and refer students who need additional assistance
- Create a formal process to assess and document student progress during interventions and determine next steps

Additional Suggested Priority Areas

The Collaborative Conference visiting team recommends the school consider an additional Priority Area.

Priority Area #4 Goal Statement: The school will ensure all students are active learners who have opportunities to lead their own learning. (2.4, 2.5)

Visiting Team Response

The visiting team suggests connecting the district-wide goal of personalized instruction with the instructional strategies needed for students to attain the transferable skills of the vision of the graduate. In this work, faculty would benefit from professional development on instructional practices that engage learners in learning that:

- is personalized, relevant, and authentic
- provides opportunities for students to determine learning outcomes
- is project-based
- fosters student agency by providing opportunities to set goals and reflect upon the results to guide their own learning process
- requires the application of knowledge and skills to authentic tasks
- fosters student discourse and reflection on learning
- encourages student choice, pursuit of personal interests, and opportunities for creative expression
- provides opportunities to learn in and out of school

Suggested Action Steps

- Assess instructional strategies across the school and determine needs, individual and school-wide, through data, observations, and collaborative conversations
- Create and prioritize instructional goals over time aligned with the school's core values and beliefs about learning
- Provide specific and/or content-based professional development in and/or out of the district to address needs, then provide ongoing support to sustain improvements or help new staff
- Provide time to foster a collaborative learning environment for teachers to share best practices, including tiered intervention strategies
- Incorporate technology to enhance learning
- Provide positive and constructive feedback as strategies are incorporated

Commendations

Commendation

The commitment to integrating the vision of the graduate throughout the school and curriculum

Commendation

The adoption of a social-emotional advisory curriculum in grades 5-8

Commendation

The seamless merger of the middle and high schools into one school with the same principal

Commendation

The security of the school building, including cameras, protocols, and a school resource officer contributing to a strong feeling of physical safety among students and staff

Commendation

The spirit of collaboration among staff, administrators, and district leaders

Commendation

The senior capstone project in which students choose and solve a real-world problem

Commendation

The open, bright, and clean learning environments throughout the school allowing for collaborative learning

Commendation

The wide range of courses and extracurricular learning opportunities available to students

Commendation

The robust technological resources available to students and teachers across the school

Commendation

The crisis protocol training for all staf

Recommendations

Recommendation

Ensure adequate time and structure for productive formal collaboration to align curriculum, develop common assessments, and engage data analysis to support and improve curriculum, instruction, assessment practices, and student learning

Recommendation

Ensure library information services staff has sufficient time to actively support and engage the implementation of the school's curriculum and instructional practices

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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

A school's initial/continued Accreditation is based on satisfactory progress implementing the school's improvement/growth plan based on the Priority Areas validated by the visiting team and recommendations identified by the Commission as it monitors the school's progress and changes which occur at the school throughout the decennial cycle. The school will complete a Summary Report and host a Decennial Accreditation visiting team two years after the Collaborative Conference to show progress implementing the school's Priority Areas. The Decennial visiting team will identify recommended next steps as well as additional recommendations for the school to continue to align with the Standards for Accreditation and to improve outcomes for students.

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

The visiting team would like to express thanks to the community for the hospitality and welcome. The school community completed a Self-Reflection that clearly identified the school's strengths and areas of need. The time and effort dedicated to the Self-Reflection and preparation for the visit ensured a successful Collaborative Conference visit.

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES Commission on Public Schools

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

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

Roster of Team Members

Chair(s)

Chair: Mr. Troy Hopkins - North Stonington Public Schools

Team Members

Rachel Barnes - Monomoy Regional High School

Zachary Best - Hamilton-Wenham Miles River Middle School

Dr. Nick Fitzgerald - Canton High School

Matthew Gagnon - Hopedale Junior-Senior High School