



**VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**  
for

**Newtown High School**

Sandy Hook, CT

**Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue**

*Principal*

Newtown High School

12 Berkshire Road

Sandy Hook, CT 06482

**Dr. Kathleen Montagano**

*Chair*

New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.

3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100

Burlington, MA 01803-4514

**Dr. Richard Sanzo**

*Assistant Chair*

Wilton High School

395 Danbury Road

Wilton, CT 06897

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# STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS

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## THE DISTRIBUTION, USE, AND SCOPE OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT

The Commission on Public Secondary Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges considers this visiting committee report to be a privileged document submitted by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges to the principal of the school and by the principal to the state department of education. Distribution of the report within the school community is the responsibility of the school principal. The final visiting committee report must be released in its entirety within sixty days (60) of its completion to the superintendent, school board, public library or town office, and the appropriate news media.

The prime concern of the visiting committee has been to assess the quality of the educational program at this school in terms of the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. Neither the total report nor any of its subsections is to be considered an evaluation of any individual staff member but rather a professional appraisal of the school as it appeared to the visiting committee.

# **STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION**

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The Committee on Public Secondary School's Standards for Accreditation serve as the foundation for the accreditation process and by which accreditation decisions are made. The seven Standards are qualitative, challenging, and reflect current research and best practice. The Standards, written and approved by the membership, establish the components of schools to ensure an effective and appropriate focus on teaching and learning and the support of teaching and learning.

## **Teaching and Learning Standards**

**Core Values and Beliefs About Learning**

**Curriculum**

**Instruction**

**Assessment of and for Student Learning**

## **Support Standards**

**School Culture and Leadership**

**School Resources for Learning**

**Community Resources for Learning**

# CORE VALUES, BELIEFS, AND LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

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## Teaching and Learning Standard

*Effective schools identify core values and beliefs about learning that function as explicit foundational commitments to students and the community. Decision-making remains focused on and aligned with these critical commitments. Core values and beliefs manifest themselves in research-based, school-wide 21st century learning expectations. Every component of the school is driven by the core values and beliefs and supports all students' achievement of the school's learning expectations.*

1. The school community engages in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research-based best practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning.
2. The school has challenging and measurable 21st century learning expectations for all students which address academic, social, and civic competencies, and are defined by school-wide analytic rubrics that identify targeted high levels of achievement.
3. The school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school, drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom, and guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations.
4. The school regularly reviews and revises its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, as well as district and school community priorities.

# CURRICULUM

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## Teaching and Learning Standard

*The written and taught curriculum is designed to result in all students achieving the school's 21st century expectations for student learning. The written curriculum is the framework within which a school aligns and personalizes the school's 21st century learning expectations. The curriculum includes a purposefully designed set of course offerings, co-curricular programs, and other learning opportunities. The curriculum reflects the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The curriculum is collaboratively developed, implemented, reviewed, and revised based on analysis of student performance and current research.*

1. The curriculum is purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations.
2. The curriculum is written in a common format that includes:
  - units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills
  - the school's 21st century learning expectations
  - instructional strategies
  - assessment practices that include the use of school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics.
3. The curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through:
  - inquiry and problem-solving
  - higher order thinking
  - cross-disciplinary learning
  - authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school
  - informed and ethical use of technology.
4. There is clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum.
5. Effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation exist between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district.
6. Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are sufficient to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities.
7. The district provides the school's professional staff with sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research.

# INSTRUCTION

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## Teaching and Learning Standard

*The quality of instruction is the single most important factor in students' achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Instruction is responsive to student needs, deliberate in its design and delivery, and grounded in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. Instruction is supported by research in best practices. Teachers are reflective and collaborative about their instructional strategies and collaborative with their colleagues to improve student learning.*

1. Teachers' instructional practices are continuously examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations.
2. Teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by:
  - personalizing instruction
  - engaging students in cross-disciplinary learning
  - engaging students as active and self-directed learners
  - emphasizing inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking
  - applying knowledge and skills to authentic tasks
  - engaging students in self-assessment and reflection
  - integrating technology.
3. Teachers adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by:
  - using formative assessment, especially during instructional time
  - strategically differentiating
  - purposefully organizing group learning activities
  - providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom.
4. Teachers, individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices by:
  - using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments
  - examining student work
  - using feedback from a variety of sources, including students, other teachers, supervisors, and parents
  - examining current research
  - engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice.
5. Teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices.

# ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT LEARNING

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## Teaching and Learning Standard

*Assessment informs students and stakeholders of progress and growth toward meeting the school's 21st century learning expectations. Assessment results are shared and discussed on a regular basis to improve student learning. Assessment results inform teachers about student achievement in order to adjust curriculum and instruction.*

1. The professional staff continuously employs a formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.
2. The school's professional staff communicates:
  - individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to students and their families
  - the school's progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to the school community.
3. Professional staff collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement.
4. Prior to each unit of study, teachers communicate to students the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed.
5. Prior to summative assessments, teachers provide students with the corresponding rubrics.
6. In each unit of study, teachers employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments.
7. Teachers collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments.
8. Teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work.
9. Teachers regularly use formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning.
10. Teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice, including all of the following:
  - student work
  - common course and common grade-level assessments
  - individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
  - standardized assessments
  - data from sending schools, receiving schools, and post-secondary institutions
  - survey data from current students and alumni.
11. Grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning.

# SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

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## Support Standard

*The school culture is equitable and inclusive, and it embodies the school's foundational core values and beliefs about student learning. It is characterized by reflective, collaborative, and constructive dialogue about research-based practices that support high expectations for the learning of all students. The leadership of the school fosters a safe, positive culture by promoting learning, cultivating shared leadership, and engaging all members of the school community in efforts to improve teaching and learning.*

1. The school community consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all.
2. The school is equitable and inclusive, ensuring access to challenging academic experiences for all students, making certain that courses throughout the curriculum are populated with students reflecting the diversity of the student body, fostering heterogeneity, and supporting the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.
3. There is a formal, on-going program(s) or process(es) through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.
4. In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff:
  - engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning
  - use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices
  - dedicate formal time to implement professional development
  - apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
5. School leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning.
6. The organization of time supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students.
7. Student load and class size enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students.
8. The principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations.
9. Teachers, students, and parents are involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership.
10. Teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning.
11. The school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.
12. The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school.



# SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

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## Support Standard

*Student learning and well-being are dependent upon adequate and appropriate support. The school is responsible for providing an effective range of coordinated programs and services. These resources enhance and improve student learning and well-being and support the school's core values and beliefs. Student support services enable each student to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.*

1. The school has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, that support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.
2. The school provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services.
3. Support services staff use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student.
4. School counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
  - deliver a written, developmental program
  - meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling
  - engage in individual and group meetings with all students
  - deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers
  - use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.
5. The school's health services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
  - provide preventative health services and direct intervention services
  - use an appropriate referral process
  - conduct ongoing student health assessments
  - use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.
6. Library/media services are integrated into curriculum and instructional practices and have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
  - are actively engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum
  - provide a wide range of materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum
  - ensure that the facility is available and staffed for students and teachers before, during, and after school
  - are responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning
  - conduct ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.
7. Support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners, have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
  - collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations
  - provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students
  - perform ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

# COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

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## Support Standard

*The achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations requires active community, governing board, and parent advocacy. Through dependable and adequate funding, the community provides the personnel, resources, and facilities to support the delivery of curriculum, instruction, programs, and services.*

1. The community and the district's governing body provide dependable funding for:
  - a wide range of school programs and services
  - sufficient professional and support staff
  - ongoing professional development and curriculum revision
  - a full range of technology support
  - sufficient equipment
  - sufficient instructional materials and supplies.
2. The school develops, plans, and funds programs:
  - to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant
  - to properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment
  - to keep the school clean on a daily basis.
3. The community funds and the school implements a long-range plan that addresses:
  - programs and services
  - enrollment changes and staffing needs
  - facility needs
  - technology
  - capital improvements.
4. Faculty and building administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget.
5. The school site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services.
6. The school maintains documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations.
7. All professional staff actively engage parents and families as partners in each student's education and reach out specifically to those families who have been less connected with the school.
8. The school develops productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning.

# School and Community Summary

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## School and Community Summary

Established in 1711, Newtown is a scenic town located in Fairfield County in southwestern Connecticut, about 60 miles from New York City. Newtown is bordered on the south by Easton and Redding, on the north by Bridgewater and Southbury, on the east by Oxford and Monroe, and on the west by Bethel and Brookfield. Newtown is traversed by Interstate 84, U.S. Routes 6 and 302, and Connecticut Routes 25 and 34. The area of the town is 38,644 acres or 60.38 square miles, making it the fifth largest town, area-wise, in the state. Newtown is comprised of the Borough, Sandy Hook, Hawleyville, Botsford, and Dodgingtown “neighborhoods.”

Newtown has four elementary schools serving grades K-4, an intermediate school serving grades 5 and 6, a middle school serving grades 7 and 8, and a high school serving grades 9-12. Newtown High School also receives a small number of students from St. Rose of Lima parochial school, serving grades K-8, and two independent schools, also serving grades K-8. The Newtown Public School District offers full-day kindergarten and a special needs pre-kindergarten program, which is currently housed at the high school.

Newtown's population is approximately 27,900, with a labor force of 14,733 individuals. The unemployment rate in town is 5.5 percent, compared to the state average of 7.8 percent. The median household income is \$113,067 compared to the state average of \$69,243. Since 2009, the median home sale price has fallen from \$438,500 to \$347,500. According to the 2010 Census, the poverty rate in Newtown is 3.3 percent, well below the county rate of 7.5 percent and the state rate of 8.7 percent. Seventy-five students at the high school are eligible to receive free lunch and 37 are eligible for reduced lunch. Four and six tenths percent of families in the district as a whole are eligible to receive free or reduced lunch.

The diversity of Newtown's racial, cultural, and ethnic makeup has increased in the last ten years. The minority population has increased from 4.4 percent to 10.7 percent. Eighty-nine and three tenths percent of the population is white; 4.6 percent is Hispanic; 3.7 percent is Asian-American; 1.2 percent is multi-race, and 1.2 percent is Black. One and eight tenths percent of district's students come from homes where English is not the primary language. Over the past six years, the Newtown High School population has fluctuated between 1,703 students and 1,760 students. The population for the 2013-2014 school year is 1,723 students. The graduation rate is 95.3 percent compared to state average of 83 percent. The two-year dropout rate is .37 percent. The average student attendance is 95.1 percent, and the average teacher attendance is 92.5 percent.

For the 2013-2014 school year, the town allotted over \$71 million, approximately 65 percent of its town budget, to education. Per pupil spending is \$12,856, below the state average of \$14,140.

Postsecondary plans for the class of 2012 included 80.8 percent attending four-year colleges; 6.5 percent attending two-year colleges; 3.5 percent entering the workforce; 2.3 percent entering the military; and 4.6 percent are pursuing other schools or programs.

Students from Newtown High School have the opportunity to apply to two inter-district magnet programs for the arts. Currently, 16 students spend Monday through Thursday afternoons at Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES) Educational Center for the Arts in New Haven, where they study creative writing, dance, music, theater, and visual arts with professional artists. Nine students study the performing arts at the Regional Center for the Arts (RCA) in Trumbull. The RCA program is designed for students with a passion for the performing arts and promotes collaboration and cooperation among socioeconomic and ethnically diverse students.

Newtown High School offers multiple opportunities for students to explore careers. Opportunities range from one-day career shadowing opportunities to 30-hour internships outside of the school day to junior/senior projects that connect individual students with a professional in the student's chosen area of interest. These programs have been offered since the mid-1990s. Since 2011, the NHS Career Center has partnered with 82 local businesses and individuals. In addition to career exploration experiences, the Career Center partners with the Northwest Regional Workforce Development Board to offer the Summer Youth Employment Program, which provides part-time summer employment to economically disadvantaged students and

students who have a documented disability.

Newtown Savings Bank and Nutmeg Cleaners both provide ongoing career exploration and work experience for Newtown High School students. Newtown Savings Bank offers internships to three high school students each year and hires one of the students for the following summer(s). Newtown Savings Bank also operates a weekly mobile teller station at the high school and has provided speakers for several business classes. Nutmeg Cleaners partnered with the special education department to provide drop-off and delivery services to the staff at the high school. Students are responsible for delivering dry cleaned items to staff as well as collecting and balancing the cash.

Newtown High School's College Career Pathways dual enrollment program offers students the opportunity to graduate having completed a full semester of college credit from Naugatuck Valley Community College based on their participation in specific courses in business education, technology, math, and science. Students may also earn credit through Johnson and Wales University after successfully completing Advanced Culinary Arts. Second and third year Applied Science Research students have the opportunity to earn four science credits each year from State University at New York (SUNY) Albany's Science Research in the High School Program.

The Newtown International Center for Education (NICE), an initiative of the Newtown Public School District, presents a forward-looking approach to international education and preparedness at the K-12 levels. Working from the belief that it is the schools' responsibility to prepare students for their world, NICE brings learning opportunities and real-world experiences to its students, teachers, and the community. The NICE program is recognized by the State of Connecticut and the Connecticut Association of Schools as a model program for aspiring districts in the region. In addition, the NICE program is recognized in the United States as one of the "Top 50 of 100" Chinese cultural programs as a Hanban-Asia Society Confucius Classrooms Program, as well as one of two programs selected to partner with Japan Society as a Japan Society Partner Alliance School. At the high school level, students have the opportunity to travel to sister schools in China, France, and Spain, host visiting students, or actively participate in delegation visits. Since the program's inception, over 150 students have traveled abroad on study tour programs and over 100 families have welcomed international delegates into their homes.

Students at all levels are eligible to receive honors and high honors as determined by their quarter grades. Students at all grade levels are eligible for departmental awards in every subject area, for both academic excellence and motivation. Students completing their junior year are eligible for a number of book awards. Graduating seniors are eligible for a number of scholarships from partnering academic, business, and civic organizations. Sports banquets honor student-athletes, coaches, and contributors to the program. The school also recognizes student behavior aligned with Newtown High School's Core Values and Beliefs. The staff gives tickets to students who demonstrate the values of "Have Respect, Act Responsibly, Work with Honesty and Integrity, Keep High Expectations, Support the Community (HAWKS) behaviors." Students are responsible for putting their tickets in a jar located in the main office. All students who earn a ticket are sent a postcard to recognize the choices they have made. Additionally, a drawing is made each week, and winners earn a HAWKS water bottle.

## **Core Values, Beliefs and Learning Expectations**

### **Newtown High School**

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

The Newtown High School Community is committed to cultivating the growth of productive and innovative citizens who demonstrate integrity and empathy in our local and global communities.

We believe that a rigorous curriculum, collaborative environment, and supportive community will foster intellectually curious, resilient, and kind individuals who continuously strive to meet their full potential.

#### **21st Century Learning Expectations**

Newtown High School students will:

## **Academic**

### Information Literacy

- Demonstrate strategies to identify, locate, and interpret information.
- Relate and apply new knowledge using a variety of resources including technology.

### Problem Solving

- Demonstrate use of the scientific method and apply appropriate procedures to solve and communicate an authentic problem or situation.

### Spoken Communication

- Convey information and ideas to others in a presentation using spoken language, non-verbal language, and when appropriate, multi-media.

### Written Performance

- Take and support a position on information and ideas.
- Convey information and ideas in a given written format.

## **Civic**

- Demonstrate civic responsibility through community service and the understanding of governmental processes.

## **Social**

- Demonstrate social responsibility by respecting yourself and others, working with honesty and integrity, keeping high expectations, and supporting the community.

# Introduction

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## Introduction

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

The governing body of the Association is its Board of Trustees which supervises the work of four Commissions: the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE), the Commission on Independent Schools (CIS), the Commission on International Education (CIE), and the Commission on Public Schools (CPS) which is comprised of the Committee on Public Secondary Schools (CPSS), the Committee on Technical and Career Institutions (CTCI), and the Committee on Public Elementary and Middle Schools (CPEMS).

As the responsible agency for matters of the evaluation and accreditation of public secondary school member institutions, CPSS requires visiting committees to assess the degree to which the evaluated schools meet the qualitative Standards for Accreditation of the Committee. Those Standards are:

### Teaching and Learning Standards

Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

Curriculum

Instruction

Assessment of and for Student Learning

### Support of Teaching and Learning Standards

School Culture and Leadership

School Resources for Learning

Community Resources for Learning

The accreditation program for public schools involves a threefold process: the self-study conducted by the local professional staff, the on-site evaluation conducted by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools' visiting committee, and the follow-up program carried out by the school to implement the findings of its own self-study and the valid recommendations of the visiting committee and those identified by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools in the Follow-Up process. Continued accreditation requires that the school be reevaluated at least once every ten years and that it show continued progress addressing identified needs.

## Preparation for the Accreditation Visit - The School Self-Study

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At Newtown High School, a committee of 12 members, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned all teachers and administrators in the school to appropriate subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities, and facilities available for young people. determine the quality of all programs, activities, and facilities available for young people.

The self-study of Newtown High School extended over a period of 20 school months between September 2013 to June 2015.

The visiting committee was pleased to note that parents, students, community members, school board members, and the superintendent joined the professional staff in the self-study deliberations. Moreover, the report was well written and consistent in its frankness, thoroughness, and level of detail in each of the Standards which provided the visiting committee with appropriate evidence to support the school's findings of its strengths and needs.

Public schools evaluated by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools must complete appropriate materials to assess their adherence to the Standards for Accreditation and the quality of their educational offerings in light of the school's core values, beliefs about learning, learning expectations, and unique student population. In addition to using the Self-Study Guides developed by a representative group of New England educators and approved by the Committee, Newtown High School also used questionnaires developed by The Research Center at Endicott College to reflect the concepts contained in the Standards for Accreditation. These materials provided discussion items for a comprehensive assessment of the school by the professional staff during the self-study.

It is important that the reader understand that every subcommittee appointed by the steering committee was required to present its report to the entire professional staff for approval. No single report developed in the self-study became part of the official self-study documents until it had been approved by the entire professional staff.

### **The Process Used by the Visiting Committee**

A visiting committee of 16 evaluators was assigned by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate Newtown High School. The committee members spent four days in Sandy Hook, CT; reviewed the self-study documents which had been prepared for their examination; met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students, and parents; shadowed students; visited classes; and interviewed teachers to determine the degree to which the school meets the Committee's Standards for Accreditation. The evaluators represented teachers and building-level administrators from public schools in Connecticut and Massachusetts and diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Newtown High School.

The visiting committee built its professional judgment on evidence collected from the following sources:

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 51 hours shadowing 16 students for a half day
- a total of 11 hours of classroom observation (in addition to time shadowing students)
- numerous informal observations in and around the school
- tours of the facility
- individual meetings with 32 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and the assessment of student learning
- group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers
- the examination of student work including a selection of work collected by the school

Each conclusion in the report was agreed to by visiting committee consensus. Sources of evidence for each conclusion drawn by the visiting committee appear in the Standards sections of the report. The seven Standards for Accreditation reports include Commendations and Recommendations that in the visiting committee's judgment will be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning and to better meet Committee Standards.

This report of the findings of the visiting committee will be forwarded to the Committee on Public Secondary Schools, which will make a decision on the accreditation of Newtown High School.

# Standard 1 Indicator 1

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## Conclusions

By design, Newtown High School (NHS) engaged in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research-based best practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning. The school's steering committee, which was comprised of faculty and staff members and one parent, directed the review process of the school's core values and beliefs and 21st century learning expectations, which the school refers to as graduation standards. The process began with a survey to Newtown faculty, staff, students, and parents/community. One of the aims was to identify recurring key words. In one of the revisions, the word, "resilient" was added in response to the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy because the word was used prominently in messages about recovery throughout the community. Another aim of the survey was to determine what the community valued in the three specific categories of academic, social, and civic expectations of students. The educational research that shaped the evolution of these academic expectations included the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects as well as a 21st century skills crosswalk developed by the Education Connection that includes frameworks from the North Central Regional Education Lab (NCREL), the International Society for Technology Education (ISTE), and the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21). The graduation standards are also influenced by the work of Jonathan Costa and his research on 21st century learning expectations. The review process of the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations included a review of four drafts developed between October 2012 and May 2013. The final draft was approved by the faculty and the board of education. The core values, beliefs, and graduation standards are articulated in a document entitled Newtown High School Core Values and Beliefs in a visual format utilizing the school colors, blue and gold. The bold, striking colors and clear graphics are eye-catching on the school's webpage, and in hallways and classrooms. The document clearly delineates NHS's core values and beliefs, and key words, for example, rigorous, collaborative, and supportive are emphasized. Academic, civic and social standards are clearly articulated in the document. The four academic graduation standards of information literacy, problem solving, spoken communication, and written performance are set off in italics and followed by bulleted indicators. A separate document contains social and civic expectations, denoted by using an acronym of the school's mascot, which is the hawk. The acronym of HAWKS denotes the key concepts including "Have respect, Act responsibly, Work with honesty and integrity, Keep high expectations, and Support the community." This acronym provides a user-friendly way for students to understand and meet the social standards. The concept is complementary to and used concurrently with the academic graduation standards. It is also easily identifiable and displayed on the webpage and throughout the building. By engaging in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process grounded in current research-based best practices to identify and commit to the core values, beliefs, and graduation standards, all stakeholders are invested, and the community's values and educational priorities are embedded into the culture of the school, are well known and practiced by staff and students, and foster learning for all students.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- school board
- central office personnel



# Standard 1 Indicator 2

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## Conclusions

Newtown High School has challenging and measureable 21st century learning expectations (graduation standards) for all students which clearly address academic, social, and civic competencies, and are defined by school-wide rubrics that target high levels of achievement. According to the Endicott survey, 71 percent of students and 81.9 percent of parents agree the learning standards are challenging. Each graduation standard has a corresponding 0-3 point rubric with criteria for attaining success. The language of the rubrics delineates the varying levels of achievement. For example, the spoken communication concept of "conveys information and ideas" uses criteria for each level of achievement, adding greater detail and requirements as descriptions move on the continuum from "not addressed" to "developing" to "meets standard" to "exceeds standard." A student is required to achieve success for each graduation standard at the "meets standard" level, which is a score of 2. The rubric indicators are clearly written and the criteria to meet the standards at the various levels is extensive. Most teachers use the rubrics routinely with many assignments and/or with teacher-created rubrics. For example, some freshman teachers in the world languages department make reference to the rubrics when reviewing the requirements for assignments, in order to familiarize students with them and to emphasize the value of the rubrics beyond the high school setting. The indicators and criteria to meet the standards are challenging; however, there are some differences with the rigor of execution and application of the rubrics in various classes. Because there are several criteria contained within some categories, the use of the rubrics sometimes differs and there are some differences when assignments are graded using the same rubric. For example, in the written performance standard, the category of "abides by conventions of print" has criteria for citation, grammar, spelling, usage, and proofreading. As a result, the score from the rubric is based on a more holistic grouping of the criteria unless the teacher identifies specifics. In the standard for problem solving, the indicator for "identifies problem" has one criterion, which can be scored more analytically. There was an activity in one class at a lower level (remembering) of Bloom's Taxonomy in which students had to identify parts of a machine. Some students were graded as "meets standard." Several examples of critical thinking skills at the higher level (analyzing or evaluating) of the taxonomy were used on an English assignment were also graded as a 2. In both classes, students met the criteria based on the objectives of the particular lesson. Other teachers encourage students to fulfill some of the graduation standards through a single project for which two or three of the rubrics can be used. In other instances teachers seldom reference the rubrics or use them. In contrast to the familiarity with the academic expectations and corresponding rubrics, the civic and social expectations rubrics were recently developed. They are being piloted by unified arts teachers including business, education, art, and technology (BEAT) with mixed results, especially regarding the community service portion of the rubric due to the difficulty of assessing this particular activity in which all students are not obligated to participate. Thus, the rubrics will continue to be evaluated as the staff looks for opportunities to incorporate and refine the them. At this time, there is a committee examining the graduation standards and corresponding rubrics to further define and enhance student learning. Because the school has developed graduation standards that are challenging and designed to prepare students for the 21st century, when the school-wide analytic rubrics to assess achievement of all expectations are fully developed and implemented with fidelity, students' learning will be further supported in attaining the targeted high levels of achievement.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 1 Indicator 3

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## Conclusions

The school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations (graduation standards) are actively reflected in the culture of the school, drive curriculum, consistently drive instruction and assessment, and guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations. The school community takes great pride in its culture which consistently reflects the academic, civic, and social graduation standards through its core values and beliefs. Although the curriculum does not formally cite the core values, beliefs, and graduation standards, it is understood that these concepts shape the curriculum and its delivery. It is expected that as curricula are revised, the integration will be completed. However, the common terminology is currently used for course descriptions in the program of studies. While teachers' instruction incorporates various areas of the graduation standards, because this was not consistent across all grades and subjects, it became a school improvement plan priority. By design, each year the school improvement plan is written to align with the district's strategic plan and to reflect the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations along with curricular and instructional expectations and corresponding action steps. The school improvement plan also guides goal setting for teachers as part of the teacher evaluation process. Heavy emphasis is placed on the civic and social expectations and students and teachers alike can recite the HAWKS verses almost word for word. For example, the Safe School Climate Committee initiated an incentive to catch students exhibiting one of the civic and social expectations by "doing the right thing." Teachers give tickets to students who merits the commendation, which enters the students in a weekly drawing to win a water bottle with the school logo. The expectation that students will demonstrate adherence to social and civic expectations helps reinforce the respectful atmosphere in hallways, classrooms, and general areas, such as the cafeteria. Ultimately, students exhibit a sense of pride, respect, and responsibility for their school, each other, and the faculty. Policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations are always at the forefront, and driven by the school's core values, learning expectations. For example, the creation and implementation of activities and programs such as the Link Crew, a transition team developed for freshmen, the Unified Theater program, the current professional learning communities schedule, and meetings and restructuring of the advisory program were all driven by the core values, beliefs, and graduation standards. Because the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations (graduation standards) are embodied in the positive culture of the school; they shape and drive curriculum, drive instruction and assessment, and guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations, thus, articulating the school's strongly held beliefs about the foundations of teaching and learning.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- teacher interview
- parents
- school leadership

# Standard 1 Indicator 4

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## Conclusions

The school frequently reviews and revises its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations (graduation standards) based on research as well as on district and school community priorities, but has not yet begun to use multiple data sources. The school created a committee, which meets once per month, to review and revise the core values, beliefs, and graduation standards. Currently, the committee is focusing on rewriting the school-wide rubrics and considering renaming the graduation standards. To further its work, the committee is using research models acquired from colleges across the country. For example, Capstone projects were researched to inform the revision process and further align graduation standards to national standards and expectations. The committee would like to recommend newer and more specific models that will be easier to implement in classrooms across different content areas to increase academic rigor. Presently, there is no method of formal data collection utilized for reviewing and revising the core values and beliefs. However, both district and school community priorities are articulated in the district's mission statement. The mission and vision of the board of education were used to inform and align Newtown High School's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations (graduation standards). Because the school has a coordinated system to review and revise its core values, beliefs, and learning expectations (graduation standards) based on current research and aligned to district and community priorities, when multiple data sources are used, the review and revision process will be further strengthened by a quantifiable analysis of information.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 1 Commendations

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## Commendation

The dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process used to create the core values, beliefs, and graduation standards and the multiple revisions considered to reflect the specific character, values, and essence of the community

## Commendation

The use of varied and current educational research to drive the creation of challenging academic expectations (graduation requirements) and targeted high levels of achievement

## Commendation

The highly visible displays of the core values, beliefs, and graduation requirements that are well known and practiced by all constituencies and woven into the positive culture of the school

## Commendation

The understanding and familiarity of the academic graduation standards and rubrics by students and staff

## Commendation

The development and implementation of the user-friendly HAWKS acronym to denote the social and civic expectations

## Commendation

The use of a reward system to further embed the social expectations

## Commendation

The palpable sense of pride and mutual respect between students and staff that are reflective of the social and civic expectations

## Commendation

The creation of a committee and process to ensure consistent review of the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations (graduation requirements) to meet student needs

# Standard 1 Recommendations

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## **Recommendation**

Implement the civic and social expectations rubrics fully

## **Recommendation**

Complete the review and revision of school-wide analytic rubrics and ensure the rubrics are implemented with fidelity

## **Recommendation**

Incorporate multiple data sources in the review and revision of the core values, beliefs, and graduation standards

# Standard 2 Indicator 1

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## Conclusions

Some of the curriculum was purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations (graduation standards). Curricula revised in the last few years were designed to foster achievement of the 21st century learning expectations; curricula written before this change emanated from the *Understanding by Design (UbD)* model. All departments have a written curriculum for each course. However, due to several administrative changes, central office has not yet coordinated the process of revising the individual course curricula to reflect the emphasis on the school's revised 21st century learning expectations. Although they are not explicitly articulated in the curriculum document, the graduation standards are addressed for each course in the high school's program of studies. All courses focus on one of the four graduation standards, which are problem solving (PS), written communication (WC), spoken communications (SC), and information literacy (IL). Many courses, such as in world languages, focus on two standards; some courses, including English courses, address three or four graduation standards. The Architectural Design course focuses on SC, WP, and PS; the drawing course addresses SC, WP, and PS; the biotechnology/forensic science course provides opportunities for achieving standards in PS, IL, and SC; all level 1 world language classes emphasize SC and IL. However, even if it is not explicitly articulated in the curriculum document, the curriculum for all courses provides students with multiple opportunities to practice and achieve each of the school's graduation standards. In the business communication course, students evaluate nontraditional roles for women and present their findings to the class. In ceramics classes, students write and present critiques of their own and others' work. Students in the Child Development I course complete a Prezi presentation on the family life cycle to practice and achieve the graduation standards of WC and IL. In math, the problem solving graduation standard is demonstrated in an assignment culminating with the real-world application of creating a company logo. In another math class, the problem solving and written communication performance standards are demonstrated in an assignment combining statistics with the real-world application of collecting data to analyze which is the best battery to purchase. In English, the Proteus project assignment provides students an opportunity to meet the IL, SC, and WC standards when successfully completed. According to the Endicott survey, 65.4 percent of the staff and 88.5 percent of parents agree that their children have opportunities to achieve the school's graduation standards. Student work and course assignment sheets reference the graduation standards to which the assignment aligns. When all curricula are revised and purposefully designed around the graduation standards (21st century learning expectations), all students will have additional opportunities and to practice and achieve them.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 2 Indicator 2

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## Conclusions

Some curriculum is written in a common format for all courses that includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills; the school's 21st century learning expectations (graduation standards); instructional strategies; and assessment practices that include the use of school-wide and course-specific rubrics, although the format varies depending upon when the curriculum was written or revised. The curriculum that exists in paper copy is written in different formats, which may include some of these elements. As the curriculum is written into the newly implemented Rubicon Atlas software and incorporates concept-based curriculum and instruction, the common format includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills; the school's graduation standards; instructional strategies; and assessment practices that include the use of school-wide and course-specific rubrics. However, in some cases, the concepts are more skills-based rather than concept-driven. For example, the Oceanology curriculum has the concept of currents and waves while the English 1 curriculum includes vocabulary, which is a skill rather than a concept. The difference in styles of writing curricula is due, in part, to the change from the *Understanding by Design (UbD)* format to the concept-based style. In some cases this has created a hybrid of *UbD*. Many elements of the current written curricula are similar to those in the Rubicon Atlas format, but there is no common outline or format followed. Essential questions, concepts, content, and skills and assessment practices, which include the use of rubrics, are scattered among curricula, and inclusion of the graduation standards and instructional strategies are minimal. For example, the Culinary Arts I and II curricula contain essential questions and unit objectives and an assessment titled unit laboratory assessment. However, instructional strategies are not included in the design. The Latin II curriculum includes essential questions and performance standards but not assessment practices or instructional strategies. Across the district, curriculum work is valued and is an ongoing process; however, time to write the curriculum has been limited at various intervals. Writing the curriculum in a common format that includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content and skills; the school's graduation standards; instructional strategies; and assessment practices that include the use of school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics will provide teachers with articulated curricula and students with more consistent and rigorous opportunities to achieve the curriculum standards and objectives.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- central office personnel
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 2 Indicator 3

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## Conclusions

The current written curriculum inconsistently emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through inquiry and problem solving and higher order thinking for some subjects. The curriculum includes some cross-disciplinary learning opportunities and authentic learning opportunities. Generally, the curriculum emphasizes informed and ethical use of technology. Topics, instructional activities, and assessments delineated in curriculum units require higher order thinking, and problem solving and inquiry skills; however, the depth to which this is explained in curriculum documents is limited. The Endicott survey reveals 86.9 percent of the staff agrees that the curriculum in their department/content area emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge. Eighty-five percent of the staff agrees that the formal curriculum in their subject area emphasizes inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking. Similarly, 84.5 percent of the students report that their courses challenge them to think critically and solve problems. Teachers use instruction to provide for the gaps in the written curriculum. For example, to align with the curriculum in English II, students engage in close reading and analysis of short stories in order to participate in text-based and Socratic seminars, write personal narratives and an original short story. In Western Studies I, students are asked to complete a visual arts project in which they must utilize in-class information and independent research to prepare a guide to the four systems of the Middle Ages, explain each and discuss the impact of each on the Crusades. In geometry, students participate in an investigation to determine the properties of polygons in order to apply them to solving real-world problems. Although teachers connect various disciplines within their lessons, there are minimal references to cross-disciplinary activities, assignments or collaboration written into curriculum documents. There are connections between biology and history. Marketing I references English and math. The BioTechnology/Forensics course specifies integration of math and language arts skills in the BioEthics assignment. In chemistry, a connection to history and technology is stated. However, the curriculum includes a course in humanities, which is cross-disciplinary by design and co-taught by members of two different disciplines. Accordingly, the Endicott survey indicates that 39.2 percent of the teachers agree that the curriculum emphasizes cross-disciplinary learning and 60.5 percent of students agree that teachers include topics from other subject areas in their classes. In addition, 51.3 percent of students agree that their teachers explain how to apply what they are learning in classes to learning in other courses and in their lives outside of school, and 73.7 percent of students agree that information learned in one class can be used in other classes. Authentic learning opportunities occur in individual classes and school-wide. In math and physical education, the written curriculum specifies opportunities for students to solve real-world problems. The Business Education and Applied Technology (BEAT) course offerings include a variety of enterprises in which students develop and operate their own businesses. The science department includes courses in Oceanography, Public Health, and Greenhouse Management that apply academic knowledge to real-world professions. Parents provided examples of students whose experiences in their high school courses led to a deeper involvement in the content, application of life skills outside of school, and pursuit of careers after graduation. The Endicott survey indicates that 90 percent of the students indicate that they are knowledgeable about the ethical use of technology, and 71.2 percent of the staff agrees that the curriculum emphasizes the informed and ethical use of technology. There is an acceptable use policy in place. However, the extent to which technology is used specifically to enhance depth of understanding and application of knowledge is limited at times due to access and infrastructure, while the written course curricula call for the use of technology to generate written work, record data, and deliver presentations across a wide range of classes. Specialized technology in science, business education, technical education, world languages, and fine arts enhances the ability of students to apply knowledge in authentic situations. When all curricula are revised and implemented fully to emphasize inquiry and problem solving, higher order thinking, cross-disciplinary learning, authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school, and informed and ethical use of technology, students will have increased and more consistent opportunities to ensure depth of understanding and application of knowledge in all subject areas.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study



- student shadowing
- student work
- teacher interview
- parents
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 2 Indicator 4

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## Conclusions

There is alignment between the written and taught curriculum. Lesson plans and student work reflect what is written into the curriculum guides. For example, student work from an English writing assignment on personal identity is referenced in the course curriculum. Similarly, student completion of a specific lab referenced in the curriculum indicates alignment in a biology course. According to the Endicott survey, 72.5 percent of the staff reports that the written curriculum is aligned with the taught curriculum. Primarily, the alignment between the written and taught curriculum is monitored through the supervision and evaluation process, which includes many classroom observations. Alignment between the written and taught curricula is also observed through the use instructional rounds conducted by building-based high school staff teams and district-wide leadership teams. Curriculum alignment is discussed at department meetings, professional learning community (PLC) meetings, and during professional development opportunities. Department heads receive copies of mid-year and final exams, which some use to assess alignment. There are common assessments in various subjects and in various groups of classes such as English and freshman algebra to ensure alignment between the written and taught curriculum. Shared office space among department members facilitates the alignment as teachers are able to discuss the curriculum and its implementation in unit planning. As a result, there are varied measures that denote alignment between the written and taught curricula to ensure students have access to the intended and taught curricula across subjects and grade levels.

## Sources of Evidence

- teacher interview
- teachers
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 2 Indicator 5

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## Conclusions

Effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district is limited but evolving. Constituencies within the high school are working to improve curriculum coordination, even if in informal ways, but few opportunities exist for all academic areas within the high school to formally coordinate curricula. Curricular coordination occurs at the leadership level through various administrative meetings. Special education teachers work with content area teachers to modify curriculum to meet individual student needs on a limited basis. Although in its initial stages, curriculum coordination between special education and content area teachers is evolving and common planning time is scheduled. Teachers within departments work together to develop lessons, activities, and assessments to support the existing curriculum. Informally, teachers across subject areas attempt to coordinate specific assignments or skills instruction. Vertical articulation occurs; however, there is no formal plan about the topics discussed or the intended outcomes. District-wide grades K-12 curriculum committees for each content area meet regularly throughout the year and include building-level administrators and teacher representatives. The committees also facilitate vertical curriculum articulation between grade levels on a limited basis, while looking for alignments and changes as needed and determining the courses that will be revised over the summer. Elementary teachers are working on understanding the language and jargon used at the high school and the expectations of each graduation standard at the high school in order to align instruction vertically through common goals. In addition, teachers would like more opportunities for teachers to observe across levels throughout the district in the transition grades in order to understand curricular expectations. Some of the high school math and world language teachers meet frequently with their middle school counterparts to discuss curriculum issues. Formal, effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district will further enhance students' learning from grade to grade.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 2 Indicator 6

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## Conclusions

Staffing levels, instructional supplies, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are mostly sufficient to implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. However, the sufficiency of staffing and technology is sometimes limited in supporting the implementation of the curriculum. Teachers have sufficient textbooks, supplies, and resources in the library/media center to fully implement the curriculum. According to the Endicott survey, 88.5 percent of the students agree that the school provides the instructional materials for each course, and 88.1 percent of the parents report that their son/daughter has been provided with the materials needed for each class. The resources and level of support from the library/media specialists to implement curriculum are sufficient, and 72.6 percent of parents indicate that the library and media resources adequately support learning in their son's/daughter's classes. In addition, there is adequate access to library and there are extensive collections of media resources for teachers to support their curricular units. The Endicott survey reveals that 43.8 percent of the staff agrees that the school has sufficient professional staff to implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. Fewer students were able to take the Humanities course this year, as one of the two sections was lost due to a staff reduction of one teacher from the art department. Staffing levels in some areas, particularly honors level classes, have created some class sizes in excess of 25 that inhibit the use of technology. In addition, at times, the existing technology infrastructure does not support the use of multiple devices simultaneously, inhibiting full implementation of the revised curricula in biology and chemistry. The curricula in many Business Education and Applied Technology (BEAT) classes are dependent on technology and cannot be fully implemented. In addition, outdated equipment inhibits implementation of curriculum changes in the BEAT and theatre areas. Antiquated technical equipment in the auditorium does not support the new curriculum for theater classes; however, a complete renovation of the auditorium, including new lighting, sound, and other equipment is scheduled to begin in April 2016. In order to support delivery of the curriculum in the co-teaching model, laptops for special education teachers were budgeted for the current school year and teachers are scheduled to receive them between late October and early November 2015. Sufficient access to technology to support the curriculum is difficult, especially in using the computer labs on a regular basis. As curriculum is revised and implemented, computer labs are dedicated to specific courses to allow for an increase in the number of teaching periods, making implementation of the curriculum challenging for core courses where technology is integrated. The addition of a cafeteria decreased the number of lunch waves, enabling an increase in time to deliver and implement curricula. The addition of facilities for art, music, and drama enables those departments to more fully utilize the building for delivery of their curricula. The Endicott survey indicates that 60.1 percent of the staff agrees that the facilities fully support the implementation of the curriculum including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. Teachers often supplement their classroom supplies themselves and make do with sometimes decreasing resources overall, especially in technology. There are over 60 various offerings of extracurricular activities positions. Although many of the positions are stipended, many are led by teacher volunteers. The grounds and gym have been upgraded to support the sports programs. While the school's staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, facilities, and library/media resources are mostly sufficient, ensuring sufficient staffing levels and technology in all areas will more fully support the implementation of the curriculum for all subject areas as well as co-curricular programs and other learning activities.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- parents
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership

- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 2 Indicator 7

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## Conclusions

The district provides the school's professional staff with limited personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research. In past years, the assistant superintendent supervised the process of curriculum revision along with many other duties that were not solely dedicated to curriculum. While cadres of teachers are afforded the opportunity to write selected curriculum, often over the summer, only a portion of the courses needing curriculum revision are completed. Overall, individuals within the district work diligently to work on the curriculum process, but the work is often constrained due to limited central office personnel, time, and financial resources. At this time, the district lacks the capacity at central office to efficiently supervise the curriculum development process across all subject areas, particularly at the high school level with the number of courses and revisions, which become necessary. There is a common understanding among all constituencies that the curriculum development, evaluation, and revision process is on a five-year cycle. Subjects are scheduled into the calendar every five years for curriculum work. However, the process of updating course curricula or introducing new course curricula for approval is ongoing. The district's curriculum guide was originally adopted in 2003 but has been updated three times, in 2010, 2014, and 2015, to adapt and adjust to changes in modern curriculum development and technological trends. The process itself involves a community-based approach, which is overseen by the assistant superintendent. Content area committees, which have representation of teachers, parents, and students, review and analyze the components of current curriculum for effectiveness and develop a plan for improvement. Taking into account national trends, such as the Common Core State Standards and state-mandated curriculum standards, the curriculum is revised with attention to updating the mission statement, alignment to K-12 instructional needs, and alignment of standards and objectives for each course taught. Many teachers participate in the development of the curricular units as well as research and recommend appropriate resources. Subsequently, the proposed curriculum is reviewed and discussed by the Subject Area Curriculum Committee, the district Curriculum Council, the curriculum subcommittee of the board of education, and the full board of education. There is a systematic process for curriculum revision, but it lacks criteria to evaluate existing or proposed curricula and its depth of articulation. There has been limited professional development on curriculum writing protocols; however, there is a curriculum development guide. The process is time-consuming, reportedly taking as long as seven years for a curriculum to garner full approval. Once new curriculum is implemented, there is no monitoring phase built into the curriculum evaluation process. Time is also a major constraint in providing for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum. For example, the social studies department rewrote 5 out of 16 documents during the summer of 2014. However, the information has not been entered into Rubicon Atlas due to time constraints. During department meetings, curriculum is sometimes discussed to monitor progress made during professional learning community meetings or to determine if there are teachers who are willing to work on curriculum. Weekly meetings of department chairs and the administrative team sometimes address curriculum. The Endicott survey indicates that 26.2 percent of teachers agree that there is sufficient time to work on formal curriculum evaluation and revision, although significant funding is allocated to the process of curriculum development, evaluation, and revision. As a result, there is currently variability in the quality of the products produced due to lack of time, resources, and facilitation and oversight of curriculum development. While there are sufficient financial resources, ensuring the professional staff has sufficient personnel and time will provide the basis for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- Endicott survey

- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 2 Commendations

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## Commendation

The inclusion of multiple opportunities for students across all disciplines and co-curricular programs to ensure that all students practice and achieve the graduation standards

## Commendation

The implementation of concept-based curriculum and instruction to enhance the *Understanding by Design* model

## Commendation

The implementation of Rubicon Atlas to ensure curriculum is written in a common format and provides resources for teachers to better implement the curriculum

## Commendation

The written curriculum that generally emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking

## Commendation

The time available in professional learning community meetings to discuss curriculum

## Commendation

The variety of methods, including the initial use of common assessments, to ensure the alignment between the written and taught curricula

## Commendation

The establishment of K-12 curriculum teams to foster curricular coordination and vertical articulation

## Commendation

The sufficient instructional resources, supplies, and library/media resources that support the curriculum

## Commendation



The significant funding allocated for the curriculum revision process

# Standard 2 Recommendations

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## **Recommendation**

Complete and implement the written curricula for all courses in a common format, purposefully designed around the revised graduation standards

## **Recommendation**

Ensure the written curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through cross-disciplinary learning and authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school

## **Recommendation**

Ensure effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation between and among academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district

## **Recommendation**

Provide sufficient staff and technology to fully implement the curriculum

## **Recommendation**

Provide sufficient personnel and time for ongoing collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research

# Standard 3 Indicator 1

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## Conclusions

Teachers' instructional practices are continuously examined across the school to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations (graduation standards). This happens formally through the Newtown Public School District's Evaluation and Support Plan, the State of Connecticut State Department of Education's System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED) process, and informally through peer observation, collaboration, and reflection. According to the Endicott survey, 79.7 percent of staff agrees that teachers regularly examine their instruction practices to ensure consistency with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. The evaluation and support plan outlines a rigorous and regular process of observation of instructional practice for all educators which is grounded in the school's core values, beliefs, and graduation standards. The evaluation handbook contains rating criteria for observations that align with the Common Core State Standards and SEED instructional practices. Additionally, the document contains a thorough explanation of Newtown's Vision of Good Teaching Domains, which align exactly with the school's core beliefs and values, and a rubric for assessing teachers' adherence to these practices. Examples of these specific alignments include creating a responsive and respectful classroom environment (empathy), sharing accountability and responsibility (keeping high expectations), and a range of indicators related to higher order thinking skills. Additionally, the results of a school-wide survey are examined, in part to assess how instruction supports the school's core values and beliefs. Examination of videotaped lessons with peers are also specified as part of the profession growth model. As outlined in the SEED process, teachers develop targeted student learning objectives (SLOs) which are tied to graduation requirements and develop indicators for academic growth and development (IAGDs) to measure progress toward these learning objectives. Informally, a voluntary practice of instructional rounds began in 2010. These rounds allow teachers to observe each other's classrooms with a focus on a specific instructional practices, such as student-centered lessons, and then meet to discuss the experience. On average, 60 percent of teachers have participated in rounds and 74 percent of teachers have been visited. Additionally, a district-wide leadership team conducts instruction rounds. During the 2014-2015 school year, the instructional rounds teams focused on critical thinking during their observations. Some professional learning community (PLC) and professional development time are also used to examine instructional practices in relation to the core values, beliefs, and expectations. Because the instructional practices of teachers are continuously examined across the school to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and graduation standards, students are supported in their progress toward and attainment of these expectations.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 3 Indicator 2

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## Conclusions

Teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations (graduation standards) by frequently personalizing instruction and engaging students as active and self-directed learners and many practices emphasize inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking. Engagement of students in self-assessment and reflection; integration of technology; and opportunities for authentic tasks and cross-disciplinary learning are implemented in varying degrees. The Endicott survey data indicates that 90.2 percent of staff and 81.5 percent of parents agree that teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations (graduation standards). Teachers often personalize instruction by allowing for some choice in content or the mode of assessment, and by connecting content and skill to real-world situations or personal beliefs. In English classes, students sometimes select from a range of novels that all present a similar theme or represent a particular literary technique or genre. Discussion of literary works often provides opportunities for students to make connections to their own lives. Students in English classes have written and published "This I Believe" essays; and, students in world language classes demonstrated their skills by sharing their experiences and family histories in the language they are studying. In government and other social studies classes, students applied principles of the Constitution and connected past events to present day issues. In a study of political parties, students analyzed the stances of each party on topics important to them and determined which party aligns most closely with their beliefs. Special education students who are learning life skills have classroom experiences and field trips that are geared specifically toward the needs of each student. Diagnostic assessments such as the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) are used to identify students who need intervention and adjust instruction for high achieving students. Teachers encourage students to seek assistance and freely provide individual, personalized help for students whenever possible and whenever needed by students. Nearly 48 percent of students agree that teachers spend one-on-one time with them. Teachers create cross-disciplinary units and/or activities; however, not all students experience them as such opportunities are not formally written into the curriculum. The physical education/health teachers partnered with physics teachers for students to analyze how points mapped in an orienteering exercise meet. The theater teacher worked with the English teachers in reading and staging Shakespearean plays and *The Great Gatsby*, which are part of the English curriculum. The film teacher worked with a social studies teacher to use green screen technology to help students create a presentation on civil rights. Math and social studies teachers and students collaborated on the accurate interpretation of data and statistics to be incorporated into presentations. Students in the Applied Humanities course, which is co-taught by an English and a fine arts teacher, examined literature, art, and film to explore their identities and express themselves through arts and writing. The science and art departments collaborated to construct mobiles inspired by Alexander Calder so that students could combine problem-solving skills from physics and the aesthetics of design. In world language classes, students demonstrated their language skills by delivering presentations on a wide variety of topics. Latin students are encouraged to look for the impact of the language in everyday life, sharing "Latin moments" found in school in various courses such as chemistry, forensics, and government and those found in activities and places outside school. It is hoped that the greenery class becomes more involved by providing culinary students with herbs and vegetables. Advanced Placement (AP) Physics and AP Literature students read a common book after their examinations last year. Through their instructional practices, teachers regularly engage students as self-directed, active learners. Students actively engage in small group or partner activities through experiments, discussions, or peer teaching. Students take on roles in mock trials, engage in debates, compose and perform music, create works of art, develop and prepare recipes, and design and execute experiments. Even during more teacher-centered lessons, students are continually called upon to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts and skills being presented by responding to probing questions, or applying the concepts to sample problems or hypothetical situations. Teachers often emphasize inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking, especially in honors and AP classes. In a social studies class, students were preparing for a debate on the topic of Imperialism. Students in American Government classes participated in a project-based learning simulation that required them to make spending reductions to the federal budget. While working in groups, students had to propose and justify a variety of cuts to the federal budget. There are some opportunities for students to apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks. The Endicott survey data reveals that 58 percent of students agree that teachers apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks. Students in Forensic Science classes participated in an activity to help them understand the critical process of accurately recording a crime scene. Students in the AP United States History class participated in a Colony Fair in which students acted as land representatives for the different

colonial regions and attempted to “sell” their regions to prospective colonial immigrants, also played by students. The Newtown High School Cooperative Work Experience (CWE) course prepares students for the workplace. The Business Enterprise and Applied Technology classes (BEAT) provide many opportunities for students to engage in authentic tasks; students are required to take one BEAT class as a graduation requirement. Physics teachers collaborated to create an authentic task related to buoyancy. Students took part in a competition where they constructed a cardboard boat and had to complete two laps in a swimming pool. Teachers engage students in self-assessment and reflection to varying degrees. The survey reveals that 74.6 percent of students agree that they are engaged in self-assessment after the completion of projects or reflect on their learning when in progress of project completion. Students in a Science Research class self-assess their progress in preparation for a conferences with their teacher by reflecting on which items for their project have been completed and what problems they encountered when completing assigned tasks. The Greenery class teachers led their students in a critical review of their recent holiday arrangement unit. The resulting arrangements were gifts to families, or marketed through the Newtown Greenery, a student-run enterprise. Students in English classes assess and track their skills depending upon class requirements. Teachers integrate technology into instruction sporadically and inconsistently, although many teachers use technology in a teacher-directed method to present information. The Endicott survey indicates that 84 percent of students are asked to use technology for assignments. The use of technology by students in the classroom varies. For example, in a Spanish II class, students use their cell phones as an educational tool in class. Upon entering class, students completed a brief questionnaire about their current knowledge of Costa Rica using Poll Everywhere, an online polling resource. At times, students can use their cell phones for research purposes. An American Government teacher incorporated the use of Prezi for students to create a presentation. In AP Physics, teachers integrate technology by using a simulation applet to assist with explanation of our solar system, and in AP Biology, video and animation applications are integrated into instruction and related to a topic of the student's choice. Laptops carts are available and used frequently for students to write essays. Nonetheless, teachers are sometimes hampered from integrating technology because of the unreliability of the infrastructure. While teachers personalize instruction; engage students as active and self-directed learners, emphasize inquiry, problem solving and higher order thinking skills, when all teachers are able to consistently emphasize inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking; provide cross-disciplinary learning opportunities; require students to apply skills to authentic tasks; engage students in self-assessment and reflection; and further integrate technology into instruction, teaching and learning will be strengthened.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- community members
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 3 Indicator 3

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## Conclusions

Teachers regularly adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by using formative assessment during instructional time, purposefully organizing group learning activities, and providing additional support. However, teachers provide differentiation and make use of alternative strategies less frequently within the regular classroom. Teachers frequently use formative assessments during instructional time to check student understanding and engagement and adjust instruction accordingly. Bell ringers and opening prompts are often used to assess student readiness to learn and tie lessons to previous materials and concepts. Throughout the lesson, teachers often circulate around the room and check in with students one-on-one. Teachers sample whole-class progress via clickers, whiteboards, Google surveys, Poll Everywhere, and other quick methods. At the end of class, teachers often use exit slips or closers to assess student proficiency and plan for the next class. Teachers very often differentiate instruction through choice of topic, modes of assessment, and various lesson formats by providing lessons that appeal to auditory, kinesthetic, and visual learners day-to-day for entire classes, rather than within a particular day's instruction for a particular type of learner. The Endicott survey indicates that 82.4 percent of the staff agrees that teachers differentiate instruction, mostly with choice of topics or modes of assessment and individual help for students. Endicott survey results show that 85 percent of teachers and 92.3 percent of students agree that teachers make extensive use of purposefully organized group learning activities. In math, science, English, social studies, and world language classes, students work with partners and groups of various sizes use jigsaw activities, gallery walks, text analysis, and lab activities that encourage students to support each other as they develop their understanding of content and skills. Teachers consistently provide additional support within the regular classroom, walking around the room as students participate in group or individual work to assess progress and field questions. Teachers are unwilling to let students say they can't do something, rather choosing to use guiding questions and prompts, or reframe questions or tasks until the student succeeds. According to the Endicott survey, 87 percent of parents agree that teachers provide additional support to their students when needed, and parents emphasized the willingness of teachers to meet with students before and after school and during free periods. Teachers work extensively with the staff of the academic labs and tutoring centers as well as with special education teachers and paraprofessionals to support students. Teachers also make use of online platforms where students can post work for review or engage in a dialogue with their teachers about their work. Alternative learning strategies are used as needed and appropriate for students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs) or Section 504 accommodations, but are less commonly used with regular education students. However, alternative strategies such as peer teaching in English and Spanish classes demonstrate the awareness and willingness of staff to provide such alternative strategies for their students. Teachers frequently adjust instructional practices by using formative assessment, purposefully organizing group activities, and providing additional support; and, when alternative strategies and use of strategic differentiation are fully integrated into all classrooms, the needs of all students will be further supported.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- school board
- Endicott survey

# Standard 3 Indicator 4

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## Conclusions

To varying degrees, teachers individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices by frequently examining current research and often using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments, examining student work, using feedback from a variety of sources, including students, other teachers, supervisors, parents, and engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice. The Endicott survey indicates that 86.3 percent of staff agrees that they are using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments. There are several assessment tools used to collect a good amount of data for teachers to analyze. As part of the evaluation process, teachers must identify two student learning objectives (SLOs) that are linked to the school-wide rubrics, and document their progress in meeting these goals. Teachers individually analyze their subject-specific formative assessment data to modify their instructional strategies to help improve student achievement. Teachers meet collaboratively during professional learning community (PLC) time and departmental time to analyze data on common formative and common summative assessments, and quality performance assessments. Math teachers tested Algebra I students to create a benchmark for showing growth over time. These same students were tested at other various times during the school year. Often, teachers lack the time to fully discuss or examine student work within their own departments and during professional learning community time. A recent professional development activity was focused on examining student work in order to bring attention to use of student work to improve instructional practice. Science teachers worked during their PLCs to create their quality performance assessments. Many of these assignments having been administered to students, so the focus was on using student work samples to standardize rubrics and teachers selected some of those work samples as exemplars of various levels of achievement. Teachers of Advanced Placement (AP) Psychology examined student work outputs during their PLC time and, based on their discussions, modified instructional practices to include more inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking. The teacher evaluation plan calls for annual surveys to be administered to students, parents, and colleagues, and for staff to review these surveys with their evaluator. At the time of the Endicott survey, 29.4 percent of parents were asked for feedback by teachers. Department leaders and administrators engage in formal and informal classroom observations. After observations have been completed, teachers meet with the observers to review best practices and various strengths and weaknesses with regard to instructional practices. In addition, Newtown also created a walk-through protocol for instructional rounds that focuses on critical thinking and student learning. Evidence is collected and feedback is provided to the teacher who was observed. Teachers analyze various summer reading literature focused on current research as assigned by administrators including some articles and books, such as *Drive-Pink*, *Common Formative Assessments*, and *Classroom Instruction that Works*. The faculty engaged in one of five differently formatted book discussions focused on the same book, *Making Thinking Visible: How to Promote Engagement, Understanding, and Independence for All Learners*. Teachers chose from a variety of formats that allowed them to explore new skills and refine existing ones. Some teachers explored Google Hangout; others studied instructional rounds with assistant principal; some engaged in a Reader's Workshop with English teachers; others attended a text-based seminar with English teachers; and some engaged in a Twitter chat with the principal. Teachers also engage in professional discourse as a part of the Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) program. Many teachers have been trained to be a TEAM mentor and have a TEAM program support plan that identifies the building's master mentors, TEAM mentor teachers, and teachers new to the TEAM program. Mentors engage new teachers in completing modules during free periods or after school to help improve practice. In addition, an English teacher provided Common Core instructional strategies as a coach for Newtown High School. Teachers individually and collaboratively improve their instructional practices by examining current research, using achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments, examining student work, using feedback from other teachers and supervisors, and engaging in professional discourse; therefore, when feedback from students and parents is incorporated and full data analysis can be completed, there will be more opportunities for teachers to reflect upon and improve upon instructional practice.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Endicott survey



# Standard 3 Indicator 5

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## Conclusions

Many teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. The Endicott survey demonstrates that 88.8 percent of students, 81.5 percent of parents and 94.5 percent of staff agree that teachers maintain expertise in their content area and content-specific instructional practices. Many teachers are affiliated with professional organizations in their content area, including but not limited to the Connecticut Association of Physics Teachers, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the Latin American Studies Association, the Connecticut Music Educators Association, and the National Association of School Psychologists. Teachers partake in a variety of conferences and workshops, many of which they seek out on their own. For example, mathematics teachers attended a two-day training session on the pilot Algebra I curriculum adopted by the Connecticut State Department of Education. English teachers traveled to New York to become students at Bard College's Institute for Writing and Thinking, where they studied the work of Emily Dickinson, Robert Lowell, William Shakespeare, and William Wordsworth. Social studies teachers attended the Holocaust Middle East Educator's Workshop at the University of Hartford where they studied the Arab-Israeli Conflict and Zionism. In addition, teachers visited area high schools and colleges to learn about content area and content-specific instructional practices. Teachers also post to a school-wide blog that celebrates each individual teacher's actions toward furthering their expertise in their content area. This provides a forum for sharing their new learning with the rest of the staff. Teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and content-specific instructional practices, providing students with increased opportunities to be engaged in learning.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 3 Commendations

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## Commendation

The formal and informal systems for examining instructional practices to ensure alignment with the school's core values, beliefs, and graduation standards

## Commendation

The frequent use of formative assessment during classes to adjust instruction

## Commendation

The wide use of various instructional practices that engage students as active and self-directed learners

## Commendation

The use of purposefully organized group activities to meet the needs of each student

## Commendation

The tremendous amount of time and additional support willingly provided by teachers for individual students within and outside of the classroom

## Commendation

The expertise maintained by teachers in their content area and content-specific instructional practices

# Standard 3 Recommendations

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## **Recommendation**

Develop and implement more opportunities to engage all students in cross-disciplinary learning and self-assessment and reflection in all curricular areas

## **Recommendation**

Ensure opportunities for students to apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks in all curricular areas

## **Recommendation**

Implement instruction that emphasizes inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking skills in all curricular areas

## **Recommendation**

Increase the use of technology by students to support classroom instruction

## **Recommendation**

Implement differentiated instructional practices in all classrooms

## **Recommendation**

Ensure feedback from students and parents is incorporated and full data analysis is completed for teachers to further reflect upon and improve upon instructional practice

# Standard 4 Indicator 1

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## Conclusions

The professional staff continuously employs a formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the 21st century academic learning expectations (graduation standards). Students must demonstrate their progress by at least scoring "meeting the standard" for each specific graduation standard in accordance with the school-wide rubrics in order to graduate from Newtown High School. It is through this requirement that whole-school and individual student progress is measured. Each course offering has a specific graduation requirement designated in order to provide students with opportunities to meet graduation requirements, and there are multiple opportunities to meet the standard in more than one class. According to the Endicott survey, 73.2 percent of the staff agrees that they understand the formal process, based on the use of the school-wide rubrics, to assess school and individual student progress in achieving learning expectations. In some content areas, teachers make a concerted effort to use school-wide rubrics as a part of assessment of student learning. For example, world languages and art teachers have incorporated performance tasks, which measure problem solving and spoken communication. However, other content areas supplement the use of the school-wide rubrics with course-specific rubrics as a means of assessing and tracking student progress toward the graduation standards, making the assessment process different in determining how students are progressing in accordance with the school-wide rubric. For example, the English and social studies departments created additional course-specific rubrics to address written skills not included in the present written communication rubric. The social and civic rubrics are still in the process of revision and are not yet implemented. When the formal process, based on school-wide rubrics for all graduation standards, is fully and consistently implemented, whole-school and individual progress in achieving the the graduation standards can be better assessed.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- school board
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

# Standard 4 Indicator 2

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## Conclusions

Much of the school's professional staff communicates individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations (graduation standards) to students and families; however, the staff is still in the process of finding ways to communicate the school's progress to the school community. The courses in which students can achieve graduation standards are described in the student handbook and in the program of studies. Students must maintain consistent communication with their guidance counselor and assistant principal to maintain an up-to-date understanding of the fulfillment of the graduation standards. Students and parents can access student progress through the parent portal in PowerSchool and/or can email the guidance counselors at any time during the school year to check student progress. According to the Endicott survey, 52 percent of parents agree that the school provides them with a formal report explaining student progress in achieving graduation standards. At this time, the professional staff is still in the process of finding ways to communicate the school's progress in achieving graduation standards to the entire school community. A graduation standards committee, led by the principal, has been formed to formulate a method to communicate the whole-school progress toward the graduation standards to the school community. The principal hosts a monthly roundtable session, where parents may ask questions regarding this issue. Information on achieving the graduation standards is also communicated at the annual open house for the parents in attendance. While individual student progress in achieving the school's graduation standards to students and their families is communicated, when whole-school progress toward achieving the graduation standards is reported to the community, all stakeholders will have increased awareness of how students are meeting the expectations.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- Endicott survey

# Standard 4 Indicator 3

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## Conclusions

The professional staff collects data and is beginning to disaggregate and analyze data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement in a systematic method. A significant amount of achievement data is produced based on results from school-based assessments, state assessments, and standardized assessments such as Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), the SAT, and PSAT. The English and math departments have developed common formative and summative assessments as a means to identify students' academic needs, to place students in appropriate classes, and to make changes to instructional, curriculum, and assessment practices. The Student Assistance Team (SAT) meets regularly to discuss data of students who are struggling and provides intervention strategies for teachers to use. Teachers are also provided with information for English language learner students and students on Section 504 plans to help ensure their success. Student services staff meets on a weekly basis with content specialists to discuss student needs and to assist teachers in modifying or accommodating instruction and assessment to ensure students meet curriculum objectives. Professional learning communities (PLCs) meet once a month for an extended time with the specific purpose of analyzing achievement data. Teachers also analyze data to set student learning objectives and to set their own goals for the teacher evaluation process. PLC and departmental meetings are used to examine student work. Many teachers use informal meeting times before and after school to collaborate and respond to students who are experiencing any difficulties with academics. There is an ongoing accumulation and recording of multiple types of achievement data and teachers make constant efforts to assist students; however, practices vary widely in how students are identified for assistance. When the professional staff systematically collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data, teachers will be able to more efficiently respond to any inequities in student achievement.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- school board
- community members
- central office personnel
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 4 Indicator 4

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## Conclusions

Prior to each unit of study, most teachers clearly and consistently communicate to students the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations (graduation standards) and the related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed. Teachers make deliberate connections between the graduation standards in their daily practice, including the civic and social standards. In addition, most teachers review the rubrics and communicate the corresponding expectations. In many cases, the school-wide graduation standards rubric is attached to student assignment sheets. Teachers from multiple content areas clearly articulate unit-specific learning goals through assignment criteria sheets and assignment rubrics. According to the Endicott survey, 68.8 percent of students agree that their teachers explain what the learning expectations are before each unit of study; 56.9 percent of teachers agree that they communicate to students the school's learning expectations and corresponding rubrics; and 74.9 percent of parents believe teachers communicate the learning expectations to the students prior to each unit of study. Although most teachers purposefully identify the graduation standard that will be assessed, when all teachers follow this practice, students will gain a clearer understanding of the relationship between the graduation standards and learning goals that will be assessed.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- Endicott survey

# Standard 4 Indicator 5

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## Conclusions

Prior to summative assessments, most teachers provide students with corresponding rubrics. It is common practice when assignments are initiated to discuss how each specific assessment is aligned with the identified graduation standard and learning objective for the class. According to the Endicott survey, 83.6 percent of students agree that they understand in advance what work they have to accomplish to meet teachers' expectations. Specific graduation standard competencies are identified for each course, which serves as guidance for students to choose courses to offer them specific opportunities to satisfy graduation requirements. Most departments focus on providing student opportunities to satisfy graduation standards with a minimum of two to three times per academic course. Most departments have developed summative assessments with the corresponding graduation standards and course-specific rubrics and/or school-wide rubrics. For example, English and social studies teachers give written assignments, which have the school-wide graduation standard rubric included. Also, world language and art teachers assign projects, which incorporate the problem solving and spoken communication graduation rubrics. English and social studies teachers created additional course-specific rubrics designed to measure other 21st learning expectations, which are not addressed within the graduation standard rubrics. Using rubrics prior to assessments is standard practice in all departments. An honors level Chinese class assignment involved National Teacher Appreciation day and students are assessed using a course-specific rubric. In an art class, students critique a piece of art from specific genres and use a course-specific rubric. Science teachers employ their own course-specific rubrics for assessing labs. The music theory teacher assesses students' original compositions with a course-specific rubric. According to the Endicott survey, 89.9 percent of students agree that teachers use rubrics to assess work their work, and 83.7 percent of students agree they understand the rubrics their teachers use. While teachers use course-specific rubrics prior to summative assessments, not all teachers use the school-wide rubrics for summative assessments that include the graduation standards. Consequently, prior to summative assessments, teachers provide students with corresponding course-specific rubrics enabling them to understand what they are expected to know and be able to do along with the expected levels of performance.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student work
- teacher interview
- students
- Endicott survey



# Standard 4 Indicator 6

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## Conclusions

In each unit of study, most teachers employ a wide range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments. According to the Endicott survey, 90 percent of teachers agree that they utilize a variety of assessment strategies including formative and summative assessments. For example, teachers use check-ins, graded journal prompts, mini white boards for peer feedback, warm-up questions, sketchbook planning, vocabulary games, small group work, exit tickets, self-assessments, and quizzes to assess students formatively. Also, teachers use a variety of summative assessments such as persuasive writing, art installations, demonstrations, experiments, labs, oral presentations, portfolio presentations, debates, critiques, traditional assessments, peer assessments, common assessments, and midterm and final exams. The staff tries to incorporate technology into both formative and summative assessments, such as multimedia presentations, online polls, PowerPoint presentations, videos, student cell phone research, and others. Technology is used for various assessments such as polling and Edmodo. However, access to technology for assessments, when needed, is sometimes both limited and problematic due to the aging infrastructure, outdated computer hardware, and a lack of computer lab availability. As a result of teachers employing a wide range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments, students have multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate their growth and achievement.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- teachers
- Endicott survey

# Standard 4 Indicator 7

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## Conclusions

Teachers regularly collaborate in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments. During the 2015-2016 school year, collaboration time was built into the school calendar for teachers to create, plan and revise assessments, and discuss assessment results. The professional learning community (PLC) meeting time is three hours each month, with the time created through delayed openings and early dismissal days during the course of the academic year. This is more time than has been provided in the past. The time provided for department PLC meetings is dedicated to creating, analyzing, and revising formative and summative assessments. However, teachers indicated that the PLC time provided is not frequent enough to support the type of creation, analysis, and revision of assessments that they would like to do. To their credit, teachers take the initiative to meet on their own to collaborate to create, analyze, and revise formative and summative assessments. Teachers have informal meetings when they have common preparation time in their individual schedules or free time before and/or after school. Teachers are provided with time and resources for formal collaboration on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments to better facilitate teaching and learning.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- Endicott survey

# Standard 4 Indicator 8

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## Conclusions

Most teachers regularly provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work. Teachers often provide students with timely feedback and opportunities to revise and resubmit their work before it is formally assessed. For example, math students review quiz corrections in class for further understanding. Students in English and social studies classes make time for peer editing sessions on essays, which allows students immediate feedback and revision time to make adjustments. Across the school, corrected work with feedback, is returned to students in a timely manner. Students are encouraged to meet with teachers after school or to attend review sessions for revision and improvement of work. Students utilize Google Docs frequently, allowing teachers to provide students with quick, corrective feedback. Art teachers provide informal and formal critiques of work to help students receive constructive criticism and work toward improvement. Students can also go to the math center, language lab, or writing center for additional help with their work. The math department has plans in place to pilot and implement an online tutoring program where high school seniors can help struggling math students. According to the Endicott survey, 73.3 percent of students agree that their teachers offer suggestions to help them improve their school work. Seventy-seven percent of parents agree that their child's teachers provide timely and corrective feedback to assist in revising and improving assignments. In addition, 74.7 percent of students agree that teachers provide timely feedback that is useful to them in improving their work prior to a formal assessment. Because teachers regularly provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback, students have many opportunities to revise and improve their work.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- Endicott survey

# Standard 4 Indicator 9

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## Conclusions

Most teachers regularly use formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning. Specifically, teachers regularly use the results of formative assessments to adapt instructional strategies within a lesson or prior to the next lesson to ensure that all students understand the topics or skills at hand. The ongoing assessment allows both for fine-tuning of instruction and student focus on progress. A broad range of formal and informal formative assessment procedures is employed by teachers to adjust activities for student learning such as journaling, pre- and post-unit quizzes, exit slips, sketchbook planning, writing assignments focused on specific skill development, student presentations, current events articles related to a specific theme or unit objective, collaborative quick quizzes, Socratic Seminars, and small and large group debates. The frequency of formative assessments provides an important step in the collaboration among professional staff to adapt instructional practice and improve student learning. However, collaboration among professional staff in using formative assessment results to determine appropriate, necessary changes to instructional practices varies widely due to time constraints. For example, administrators, teachers, and department heads collaborate on a regular basis during professional learning community time to review formative assessment results to determine appropriate, necessary changes in instructional practices. Many teachers also meet informally to use formative assessment data to discuss and adjust instruction within their own classrooms. According to the Endicott survey, 87 percent of staff agree that they meet formally to discuss and improve both formative and summative assessment strategies. As a result, most teachers are able to use formative assessment regularly to adapt inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- department leaders
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 4 Indicator 10

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## Conclusions

Teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively and formally and informally, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice, including all of the following: student work, common course and common grade-level assessment, individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations (graduation standards), standardized assessments, data from sending schools, receiving schools, and post-secondary institutions, and survey data from current students and alumni. According to the Endicott survey, 68.9 percent of the staff agrees that teachers and administrators examine a variety and range of student work, common course assessment, common grade-level assessment, and standardized assessments to revise and improve curriculum and instructional practices. Student services personnel collaborate with content area teachers to review student work and assessment data in order to improve instructional practices and modify curriculum to meet the needs of students receiving special education services. Some formal collaboration time is provided using professional development time built into the school calendar, but often this time is used to address other topics. As a result, formal teacher collaboration time is limited. In addition to the time provided, teachers regularly use informal time such as lunchtime and after-school hours to discuss the creation, analysis, or revision of assessments. Some content areas used department meeting time to develop common assessments, review and analyze assessment data, and plan for quarterly assessments measuring reading and comprehension skill as a means to improve instructional practice and to make minor curriculum adjustments. Also, some departments use formal meeting time to use summative assessments for placing students into specific courses and levels and to adjust instruction and assessment practices. For example, the math teachers use Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) data as a means to place freshmen in the appropriate level of geometry. Student progress toward meeting the graduation requirements is recorded and reviewed as a requirement for a diploma. The high school staff also reviews recommendations from middle school teachers. Presently, no formal protocol is in place to survey alumni in order to provide feedback. However, the guidance department does coordinate a college fair in November of each academic year, which includes alumni who have recently graduated. This interaction between seniors and recent Newtown High School (NHS) graduates provides seniors with valuable information on preparing for college. In addition, informal feedback is collected through email correspondence between guidance and alumni. In May of each academic year, guidance plans a panel discussion which includes speakers who are graduates of NHS completing their first year of college. The panel discussion focuses on alumni providing advice to seniors preparing for college the following fall. While there is abundant data in some areas, when all teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, formally examine the full range of evidence of student learning, including data from sending schools and post-secondary institutions, and survey data from current students and alumni, responsiveness to curricular revision and instructional practices can be maximized.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 4 Indicator 11

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## Conclusions

Grading and reporting practices are occasionally reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. Individual teachers or teachers on a departmental basis sometimes review grading practices to ensure there is some alignment. According to the Endicott survey, 34.6 percent of staff agrees that school-wide grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised. Some professional learning community (PLC) time and departmental meeting time are reserved for reviewing grading practices by reviewing student work samples and discussing parent and student feedback in an effort to calibrate grading. For example, English PLCs review midterm and final exams to calibrate their grading practices. Further, biology and physics PLCs work to develop common lab and graphing rubrics to align grading. Thus, the practice of revising course and department-specific grading policies varies by department. The school uses a weighted grade point average (GPA) system, which is implemented in all classes beginning in the ninth grade. This change was made several years ago as a result of careful consideration based on parent feedback to align grading policies with the core values and beliefs. In addition, transcripts are printed with weighted and unweighted GPAs as class rank is not reported. The principal employs focus groups and parent breakfasts as avenues for parents to provide feedback on various topics including grading policies. There is not yet a consistent process for review, revision, and alignment of the school-wide grading practices with the core values and beliefs. As the school's grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised, a purposeful correlation between grading and reporting practices and alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning will be ensured.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 4 Commendations

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## **Commendation**

The formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess individual student progress in achieving the graduation standards

## **Commendation**

The communication of individual student progress in achieving the graduation standards to students and their families through PowerSchool

## **Commendation**

The wide communication of the school's applicable graduation standards and unit-specific learning goals to be assessed prior to each unit of study

## **Commendation**

The regular provision of rubrics prior to summative assessments

## **Commendation**

The wide range of formative and summative assessment strategies

## **Commendation**

The frequent use of specific, timely, and corrective feedback to students, allowing for revision and improvement of work

## **Commendation**

The wide range of supports provided to help students to review and improve their work

## **Commendation**

The initiative of teachers to collaborate informally to benefit student achievement

# Standard 4 Recommendations

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## **Recommendation**

Implement fully the school-wide rubrics for civic and social expectations to assess individual and whole-school progress on the achievement of all graduation standards

## **Recommendation**

Communicate the school's progress in achieving the graduation standards to the school community

## **Recommendation**

Develop and implement a plan to collect, disaggregate, and analyze data, to more efficiently identify and adjust instructional and assessment practices to better respond to any inequities in student achievement

## **Recommendation**

Include data from sending schools and post-secondary institutions and survey data from current students and alumni for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practices

## **Recommendation**

Ensure the regular review of grading and reporting practices to ensure alignment with the core values and beliefs about learning



# Standard 5 Indicator 1

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## Conclusions

The school community faithfully, consciously, and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all. According to the Endicott survey, 86.5 percent of parents agree that the school provides a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive school culture. Seventy-one percent of the students agree that the school has clear expectations and rules. Along with feeling their school is a safe environment, 80.5 percent of students are proud of their school. The student handbook provides students with reference guidelines. The comprehensive document details the policies and procedures of Newtown High School (NHS) including, but not limited to, attendance policies, expectations for behavior, rules and procedure in the cafeteria, academic integrity policy, dress code, electronic device policy, and board of education (BOE) policies such as the use of tobacco and harassment. To ensure understanding, students and parents must print, sign, and return the last page as an acknowledgement. Also, the student handbook is discussed during advisory. The teacher handbook is a well-prepared, comprehensive document that can be used as a reference for teachers. Items include, but are not limited to, emergency response manuals, BOE policies, and information regarding the use of medications. To foster the safe environment, the safe school climate committee actively pursues areas for improvement as needed. A security staff of seven includes four non-armed security officers, along with two armed school security officers (SSOs), and one school resource officer (SRO) from the police department. Any time students are in the building, an armed security person is in the building. There are approximately 200 security cameras inside and outside the building. The cameras are motion sensed and can activate at any time of day. However, due to challenges with technology, school-based personnel have been unable to view all cameras at all times. All visitors to Newtown High School must present photo identification, which can access a personal history. Every exterior window of the building is fitted with security film to prevent window shattering. All sporting events at Newtown High School have appropriate security as dictated by attendance. Football games have four security and four police officers. Routine evacuation drills make teachers and students feel safe. Communication between faculty and administrators is ongoing and regular and the administration is visible, open, and approachable, contributing to the high morale among staff as well as the respectable behavior exhibited from the student body. The staff puts forth great effort to create a safe, positive, and warm, caring, and supportive environment for faculty and students. Students, teachers, and administrators genuinely respect and care about each other, which provides a positive and welcoming learning environment. Teachers are collegial, caring, cohesive, and supportive of each other and students. The staff remained united, resilient, and strong for students and families and each other following the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy. The positive relationships and true sense of respect between students and staff, that is fostered by community stakeholders, permeate every aspect of daily interaction and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all. Administrators and teachers regularly and consistently make themselves available to students before, during, and after school, which fosters student responsibility for learning. Students also contribute to the positive environment. The Link Crew program is a high school transition program. Freshmen come into the school to meet with junior and senior representatives to initiate a welcoming and warm beginning to the school year. The Best Buddies program is the largest organization at the high school and demonstrates the importance of including all members of the school community. The advisory program ensures that each student has a connection to an adult in the school. In addition, there are many other clubs and organizations specifically designed to engage and support students' various needs and interests. The HAWKS program provides daily reminders to students about the high expectations set forth at the high school which include: have integrity, act responsibly, work with honesty and integrity, keep high expectations, and support the community. Because the school community consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning, the results are shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all students.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation

- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- school website

# Standard 5 Indicator 2

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## Conclusions

The school strives to be equitable and inclusive, ensuring access to challenging academic experiences for most students, making certain that courses throughout the curriculum are populated with students reflecting the diversity of the student body, fostering heterogeneity, and supporting the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations (graduation standards). The compacting of levels some years back created more heterogeneous classes. There are three levels including college preparatory (CP), honors, and Advanced Placement (AP). All electives are heterogeneously grouped, along with most core classes with the exception of some math and science classes. Teacher recommendations are used to place students in certain levels; however, there is a process in place that allows students to deviate from teacher recommendations. The teacher recommendation can be overridden by having the student fill out a form, have a conversation with parents/guardians, and meet with the guidance counselor. According to the Endicott survey, 83 percent of students agree that they have a number of opportunities to take courses in which students of varying levels are enrolled. Newtown High School's heterogeneity was fostered by the removal requiring a certain grade point average (GPA) be maintained in the honors and AP courses. However, in some AP courses there are pre-requisites. In addition, the school ensures financial assistance so that all students are able to take AP exams. Currently, 3 special education students are enrolled in AP courses, 7 special education students are enrolled in honors courses, and 135 special education students are enrolled in CP courses. In the 2015-2016 school year, 514 of the total 1,682 students, which is approximately 30 percent, are taking CP classes only. Of the 214 students enrolled in vocational courses, 14 percent are enrolled in AP courses, 34 percent are enrolled in honors classes, and 52 percent are enrolled in CP classes. While the school is equitable and inclusive and fosters heterogeneity for most students, when all courses throughout the curriculum are populated with students reflecting the diversity of the student body, all students will be better supported in achieving the school's graduation standards.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- school leadership
- school support staff

# Standard 5 Indicator 3

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## Conclusions

There is a formal ongoing program or process through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations (graduation standards). At the time of the Endicott survey, 52.4 percent of students agree that the school has a program which provides an adult in the school, in addition to the guidance counselor, with whom the student meets regularly and who knows him or her well. The current mission statement for advisory promotes meaningful connections among staff and students. Because students and parents rated the sense of emotional security the lowest, and teachers rated it as the second lowest on the school and climate survey, increasing a sense of social, emotional, and physical safety and well being within the school community became a strategic goal for the 2015-2016 school year. An advisory committee, which consists of teachers, administrators, and students meets regularly to discuss ways to improve the advisory program. Plans are underway to evaluate the advisory program scheduling and to address the school's identified need for teacher training. The advisory committee also works on structure and items covered for each grade. Lesson plans and activities are given to teachers that they are mandated to follow during the eight 20-minute extended advisory periods. In addition, many of the activities and results of the lessons are collected and reviewed. Advisories also meet for ten minutes each morning and students have the same advisor for their four years at at the high school. Students experience a wide range of activities taking place in different advisory groups. Some groups create and discuss community change projects while others are use the time to do homework or prepare for the day ahead. The advisory program has changed almost every year for the past three years, including its meeting times, as various models are piloted to ensure students receive maximum benefit. In addition, teachers make every effort to connect with students throughout the school day and form relationships outside of the advisory program. They know their students well and employ many strategies and options to be available to them or provide them with assistance whenever needed. There is a formal program and process in place through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's graduation standards; however, establishing consistency will facilitate further alignment to the mission of the advisory program.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- Endicott survey
- school website

# Standard 5 Indicator 4

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## Conclusions

In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff regularly engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning, use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices, dedicate formal time to implement professional development, and generally apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The current schedule allows for three hours of meeting time a month for teachers to engage in professional learning communities (PLCs). The PLC time is a combination of two-hour delayed opening of school for students and contractual teacher meeting time after school. Professional learning communities are utilized for common planning time, building formative and summative assessments, and reviewing data and student work. Faculty and department meetings are scheduled each month. Building-based meetings are based around school-identified needs, mandated training, the accreditation process, and department collaboration. Staff takes advantage of local professional development opportunities, for example, Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) and Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) presentations, Advanced Placement training, and the University of Connecticut (UCONN) Writing Center Conference. Therefore, staff is given opportunities to participate in both in-school and out-of-school professional development. The principal and professional staff engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning, use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices, dedicate formal time dedicated to implement professional development, apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment, which creates a culture of learning for staff and improves student learning.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership

# Standard 5 Indicator 5

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## Conclusions

By design, school leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning. Newtown, as a district, did not adopt Connecticut's System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED) model for teachers, but did for support staff. The Newtown Public Schools Evaluation and Support Plan (NPS-ESP) is an adaptation of the SEED model and contains all of the components required by the Connecticut Department of Education. In addition, the model is based on the current research and is focused on student learning. The plan is shared with all teachers and is posted online. The approvals by the Newtown Board of Education and the Connecticut State Department of Education in July 2015 reinforce the beginning stages of this process. However, the current plan has been under review for the past two years. There is a sense of frustration among teachers about the value and merit of the plan because of changes. For example, last year's model required two student learning outcomes (SLOs); the current year requires just one. To help teachers, sample SLOs are incorporated into the Newtown Public School Evaluation and Support Plan manual. Teachers' understanding of the plan varies regarding the number of observations and evaluations. More importantly, there is confusion regarding when administrators or department heads are the primary evaluators. Despite the changes in the plan, the staff is confident using the software application. Administrators post all observations as well as pre- and post-conferences on Bloomboard. By employing a research-based evaluation and supervision process that requires thoughtful goal setting, discourse within and among the faculty, and pedagogical reviews of practice to support attainment of established goals, school leaders work collaboratively with teachers to improve the learning outcomes for all students.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership
- school website

# Standard 5 Indicator 6

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## Conclusions

The organization of time supports research-based instruction, enhanced by professional collaboration among teachers, and is designed to meet the vast majority of the learning needs of all students. The master schedule for Newtown High School has undergone revision every year for the past three years, with the intention of meeting students' academic and emotional needs more effectively. For the 2015-2016 school year, the schedule is comprised of 53-minute classes using a rotating drop.

Within the school day, teachers work together formally and informally to develop lesson plans and assessments. About three hours per month of dedicated PLC time for teachers is provided through delayed school openings and after-school time. One hour delays provide teachers with time. Students arrive to school at the regular time and use the time for enhancing learning or enrichment while being monitored by security, paraeducators, and assistant principals. Because the organization of time fully supports research-based instruction and collaboration among teachers, the learning needs of all students can be met.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership

# Standard 5 Indicator 7

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## Conclusions

In most cases, student load and class size enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students. Decreasing enrollment coupled with growing program needs have resulted in some incremental increases in class size. Flexible and creative approaches to scheduling and by teachers' approaches to instruction and additional help for students and a slight increase in this year's budget have helped with the balance between student load and class size and students' learning needs. A teacher's total student load is approximately 110 students and average class size is 22. Advanced Placement (AP) courses frequently have lower student enrollment numbers. For example, AP Italian has four students currently enrolled, which is an anomaly. However, some math classes have enrollment numbers approaching 28. This remains aligned with the Newtown teachers' contract cap that stipulates that there can be no more than 30 students per class. However, larger classes having 28 students often hinder teachers in meeting the individual needs of their students and makes differentiation of instruction more difficult. Although some classes do not have enough desks to accommodate the larger student enrollment, teachers creatively compensate for this by borrowing furniture and materials or by creating a flexible room utilization schedule. Not all computer labs contain enough computers for large classes, which challenges teachers with delivery of lesson plans, student access to technology, and teachers' ability to provide a hands-on learning experience for every student in the class. In addition, teachers devote hours of their personal time to meet the learning needs of individual students. With the current student loads, when class sizes are optimum for all content areas, there will more opportunities to meet the needs of each student.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- teachers
- department leaders



# Standard 5 Indicator 8

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## Conclusions

The principal, working with other building leaders, systematically and consistently provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. After a few years in flux with different building and central office administrators, the current principal has brought stability to the school, staff and students to support the core values, beliefs, and graduation standards. The principal is the primary instructional leader of the school and provides a clear vision, shows a commitment to instructional leadership, exhibits a passion for caring and supportive relationships, and serves as the guidepost for all other significant programs, events, decisions, and challenges in the school. The principal has a strong foundation in best instructional practices and ensures that decision-making is a collaborative effort that is rooted in the school's core beliefs, values, and high learning expectations. The principal also recognizes the need for additional planning at the district and school levels that will directly align with the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. Along with the principal and assistant principals, the department heads are the instructional leaders for the building. Building leaders and department heads meet for two hours every week to address initiatives, concerns, and upcoming events. Meeting agendas are created in Google Docs to ensure that the agenda is shared by all members of the meeting. In addition, meeting attendees are responsible for contributing to the shared agenda and for presenting their respective agenda items. Sample agenda items include academic progress reports, curriculum development initiatives and program needs, and concerns. The bulk of faculty meeting time is used for instruction and PLC needs. PLCs conduct data mining and analysis during meetings throughout the year. The principal is accessible to teachers at all times and continually works with teachers, providing them leadership opportunities that will enhance student learning. For example, if student need dictates, schedules are changed and courses or extracurricular activities are added. To further ensure fidelity to the core values and beliefs, an assistant principal and two guidance counselors are assigned to the freshman class. All other guidance and assistant principal staff are responsible for student load by alphabet. Each assistant principal and guidance staff member has an office for meetings with students, staff, and parents. The guidance counselors emphasize frequent and unlimited access to students who need support. The three assistant principal offices are located in different areas of the school to increase availability and visibility in the school and to support students and staff in a variety of ways. All building leaders visit classrooms frequently. The assistant principals and the principal have been in their leadership positions less than two years. They are working on defining their leadership roles and assignments in the school and strengthening their working relationship further. Their focus is on providing quality instructional leadership and providing the resources to support high quality teaching and learning for all students and staff. In addition, the principal and teachers participate on curriculum and other committees. This highly visible and cohesive approach to instructional leadership serves to improve staff and student performance over time in a variety of academic and developmental areas. Because the principal, working with other building leaders, embodies instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations; shared leadership is cultivated.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- department leaders
- school leadership

# Standard 5 Indicator 9

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## Conclusions

Teachers, students, and parents are often involved in multiple, meaningful, and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership, within the school and the school community. The principal ensures that all decision-making, programming, budgeting, and other significant organizational needs are grounded in the core values and beliefs. To accomplish these goals, teachers and students and parents are encouraged to work collaboratively with administrators to serve on different committees within the school and throughout the district and respond to various surveys. Many take advantage of these opportunities to ensure that their voices are heard and because they are aware their input will be considered in the decision-making process. Parents expressed enthusiasm about the accessibility and the transparency of the school and district administrators. Parents are viewed as partners in their children's education and are encouraged to be in communication with staff. Parents can be involved in the Principal's Breakfast, a monthly roundtable discussion, where they can informally come into the school and inquire about various topics, propose ideas, and build relationships with the staff. The information from these meetings is used in the decision-making process about the core values and beliefs of Newtown High School. Parents are also formally involved through an active Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA). Parents and students were also involved during the hiring process for the current high school principal. In addition, teachers and administrators are readily available to students who would like to discuss current situations at the high school, which promotes a sense of responsibility and ownership to be active in the school. Students are also involved in social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and web pages, which allows them to relate to school personnel. Safety and security personnel are involved in the development and implementation of school-wide plans in conjunction with local law enforcement and principals. Students are involved on the School Climate Committee and in various student government roles that allow them to be part of the decision-making at the high school. Meetings are held regularly and are attended by many stakeholders including custodial and maintenance staff. Teachers are involved in a variety of committees within the school and district-wide. Also, they are always encouraged to bring new ideas for school improvement forward for consideration. Their contributions are valued and many are implemented, such as, but not limited to, additions to clubs or activities, academic, climate, and culture initiatives, and various uses of technology. Thus, the teacher, student, and parent involvement in decision-making embraces the school's core values and beliefs by cultivating and promoting shared responsibility and leadership, and engaging all members of the school community.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

# Standard 5 Indicator 10

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## Conclusions

Teachers frequently and consistently exercise initiative and leadership essential to the ongoing improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. School administrators encourage teachers to exercise initiative and to build leadership capacity within the school and the district. Leadership positions include teachers who are academic officers, a literacy coach, and Common Core coaches. Newtown High School teachers and administrators serve on numerous committees within the school and district-wide, which require teachers to make recommendations and decisions that ultimately influence the school's success. The Instructional Rounds Committee is a voluntary committee in which teachers have the ability to provide direct and impactful feedback on instructional practices within the school based on their observations. Other opportunities for teachers include the graduation standards/core beliefs, new teacher, school scheduling, and advisory committees as well as numerous curriculum committees. Teachers take the initiative to propose clubs and activities, for example, Unified Sports, Best Buddies, and the Gay Straight Alliance. The Afternoon Program (TAP) program, an after-school alternative program, which allows students flexibility to complete their coursework for graduation, is directed by co-facilitators that are also teachers during the regular school day at Newtown High School. As a result of teachers' demonstrated initiative and leadership, there is a strong impact on teaching, ongoing school improvement, and increasing students' engagement in learning.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership

# Standard 5 Indicator 11

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## Conclusions

The board of education, the superintendent, and the principal foster collaborative, reflective, and constructive practices to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations (graduation standards). The principal, department chairs, assistant principals, guidance counselors, and instructional support staff meet weekly. There are regularly scheduled monthly meetings between all district leaders and school administrators. The principal, superintendent, and the board of education share a collaborative partnership focused on student learning. The board asks for meaningful input from the principal. The district's strategic plan was written in a highly collaborative manner with a group of stakeholders to drive the improvements for the school and the district. In conjunction, the high school's improvement plan is based on the strategic plan. The school improvement plan is developed and revised annually by the leadership team then brought forward for input from other stakeholders to ensure it is comprehensive and focused on goals that will ensure students achieve the school's graduation standards. All proposed curricular and policy revisions are presented to the board for review. All district and school administrators, as well as lead teachers, participate in many after school curriculum meetings and on school improvement team meetings. The superintendent attends numerous regularly scheduled meetings with the board, the principal, and the high school's full administrative team. Many agendas for the various meetings are developed through collaborative input. As a result of consistent collaboration and reflection, and the relationships among the board of education, superintendent, and principal, constructive improvements support and ensure students' achievement of the graduation standards.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- school support staff

# Standard 5 Indicator 12

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## Conclusions

The school board and superintendent always provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school. This delegation of authority fosters a stable, cohesive, and productive school culture for all stakeholders. The principal's professional relationships with the superintendent, the board of education, students, parents, and staff are very positive and collegial. The current principal was a teacher at the high school for nine years and returned when appointed as the high school principal in 2014. Colleagues express how glad they are to have her back. She is highly regarded as the primary leader of the school, and teachers consult with her freely and regularly. The principal works closely with the superintendent and the board of education regarding important decisions including budgeting, program development, goal-setting, planning, and instructional leadership. The principal's job description contains an indicator about the board's philosophy of allowing the principal sufficient decision-making authority. There are also statements acknowledging the principal as the chief administrator who responsible for the ultimate authority over actions of students and staff. The principal has autonomy and the ability to address school-wide, district, and state initiatives at the school level. These include working with the staff planning for implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; grading practices; student discipline; culture, climate, and safety; and supervision and evaluation of high school personnel. Thus, the board of education and superintendent ensure that the principal has the autonomy to make decisions that are in the best interest of students at Newtown High School, and the ability to forward and implement the vision reflected in the school's core values, beliefs, and graduation standards.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- teachers
- parents
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- school website

# Standard 5 Commendations

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## Commendation

The safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture and caring relationships exhibited among all members of the school community

## Commendation

The very comprehensive student and teacher handbooks that ensure seamless communication of essential school information, policies, and protocols

## Commendation

The extensive array of academic and extracurricular offerings designed to meet the academic and interest needs of students

## Commendation

The financial assistance provided to students in need so that they have opportunities to take Advanced Placement tests

## Commendation

The time and offerings provided for professional development and training to improve student learning

## Commendation

The consistent, systematic instructional leadership of the principal that is based on the school's core values, beliefs, and graduation standards

## Commendation

The highly collaborative leadership model used by the principal, assistant principals, guidance counselors, and department heads

## Commendation

The encouragement provided to teachers, students, and parents by the administrators and their subsequent involvement in meaningful and well-defined roles in decision-making processes that promote and cultivate responsibility and shared leadership

## Commendation

The initiative and leadership exercised by teachers that is essential to school improvement and students' engagement in learning

## **Commendation**

The extensive autonomy, decision-making authority, and support provided to the principal by the superintendent and board of education to lead the school

# **Standard 5 Recommendations**

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## **Recommendation**

Ensure that the school is equitable and inclusive, ensuring access to challenging academic experiences for all students and fosters heterogeneity to support the achievement of the school's graduation standards

## **Recommendation**

Provide consistent delivery of the advisory program to further its mission

## **Recommendation**

Ensure optimum class size in all content areas



# Standard 6 Indicator 1

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## Conclusions

Newtown High School has many timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students that mostly support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations (graduation standards). The multiple intervention strategies available enhance and improve student learning and well-being, and support the school's core values and beliefs. In accordance with the state requirements, Scientifically Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) are used, but are not yet fully integrated pending additional professional development for teachers and supplementing current resources. Students progress through levels of intervention from general classroom interventions to other interventions that increase in intensity for support services along the continuum. For example, a Tier 1 intervention includes general classroom interventions, conferences, peer tutoring, extra help, or other supports. A Tier 2 intervention may include an assignment to the writing academic center and/or a math/science academic center, which are staffed by adult tutors, reading support, individual or group counseling, or parent meetings with appropriate staff. The centers are also available to the entire student body to provide additional academic support as needed. At Tier 3, students are referred for other individualized programs and services. The Flexible School program (FLEX) is available for at-risk students who need academic support. However, at times, the limited capacity of the program impedes the ability of students to access this support in a timely manner. Currently, 30 students participate in the FLEX program. The Afternoon Program (TAP) is a voluntary alternative program with a vocational component available to students who fail to succeed in the regular day school program. Currently, there are 14 students in TAP. Other Tier 3 interventions might include homebound tutoring, services from counselors, or referrals to community services. In addition, peer tutors from the National Honor Society can be accessed by all students during their study halls or other available time. Eighth grade students who are identified as in need of additional support as ninth graders are placed in the Freshman Fusion program. This intervention matches students with an upperclassman for mentoring during advisory time. If a student experiences difficulty academically and/or socially, he or she can be referred to the Student Assistance Team. A plan is developed and student progress is reviewed at subsequent meetings to make decisions on any next steps. Students identified with special needs receive services in accordance with their Individual Education Programs (IEPs). Students with other disabilities may be accommodated through a Section 504 plan under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students in need of health services are accommodated through the school nurse. Because of the timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for students, including identified and at-risk students, students' achievement of the school's graduation standards are supported.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school support staff
- Endicott survey
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 6 Indicator 2

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## Conclusions

The school employs purposeful and conscious efforts to provide information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services. The Endicott survey indicates that 85 percent of parents agree the school provides information about available support services including counseling, library/media, health, and special education. The information and services available to families is comprehensive and can be obtained through Naviance, the school's Facebook page and website, and individual teacher class websites. Staff contact information is readily available on the website and communication from the school is consistent. The school recognizes that some families do not have access to the Internet or do not use technology to acquire school information, so a variety of media is used to disseminate information including, telephone communication, mail, and advertising of evening informational programs in the *Newtown Bee*, the print media for the town. Parents have access to information such as counseling services, and community resources, such as the Newtown Recovery and Resiliency Team, a Family with Service Needs petition to Danbury Court, a referral to Coordination of Care through Welmore Behavioral Health, Intensive In-Home Child Psychiatric Services, or the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Each spring the school counseling staff hosts an orientation program for all incoming freshmen families as the first of many grade-level parent meetings that are held every year. School counselors also conduct multiple developmental information meetings. For example, there are two separate evening programs for juniors and seniors regarding financing college and financial aid. The school nurse contacts parents by phone and email regularly about their children's health needs. Information about free health clinics, which are available to all families, and links to various community resources are posted on the health office webpage. School counselors and support staff correspond with families through email, phone calls, mailings, letters, and individual meetings with parents. At various times, information to the student body is disseminated through the advisory program. Because the school provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services, students and their families are supported.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- school support staff
- Endicott survey
- school website

# Standard 6 Indicator 3

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## Conclusions

In general, support services staff use technology, as the infrastructure will permit, to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student. Student information is available and accessible for students, teachers, and parents through PowerSchool; an online portal for a variety of student information including grades, attendance, and health records. The school counseling department uses Naviance, a web-based, college and career readiness software program, which allows students and their parents to assess and align goals and interests to help develop post-secondary plans. Computers are available for students to use in the guidance area. The library technology available to support student learning includes an extensive and resource-rich website. In addition, the library has 48-desktop computers, online databases, an online library catalog, electronic resource lists by both subject and course, and 24-laptop computers. In addition, Destiny software provides students and staff web-based access to the card catalog including electronic and print resources. The information posted on the school's website provides access for students and parents about the school including current and upcoming events, such as Financial Aid night and the Parent Toolkit. The high school nurses use the School Nurse Application Program (SNAP), a comprehensive medical software application designed for school nurses, to maintain and provide up-to-date medical information for each student. As a Google school, staff members are able to use Google applications and forms to share information. All staff can access IEP Direct software to review student needs. All students receive the required assistive technology per their IEPs, for example, various hardware devices and speech-to-text and reading and writing software. There are currently ten iPads being used primarily to assist students who are non-verbal or have verbal communication disabilities. When support services staff is able to maximize consistent access to available technology, they will be better equipped to deliver the effective range of the school's coordinated services for each student.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- students
- school support staff
- Endicott survey
- school website

# Standard 6 Indicator 4

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## Conclusions

School counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who deliver a comprehensive, written developmental program consistently to all students; meet regularly with students to provide academic, college and career counseling; deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers; and often use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve and personalize services ensuring each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations (graduation standards). However, counselors engage in regularly scheduled individual and group meetings with all students less frequently. Nine certified school counselors, which includes eight guidance counselors and the department head, serve the entire student body of approximately 1,700 students. Newtown's ratio of students to counselors is approximately 189:1. In addition, a part-time agency counselor supports staff and provides wellness opportunities. As part of the developmental guidance program, school counselors meet with students in group settings to provide academic, career, personal, and college counseling during grade-level counselor workshops. These workshops address skills for learning, school success, academics to life success, investigating careers, career success, course selection, relationship between school and work, respect of self and others, goal setting and attainment, survival, and safety skills. School counselors facilitate these workshops with groups of students that may include students who are not on their caseload. Large group, school-wide initiatives from the school counseling department include guest speakers. The Signs of Suicide (SOS) Prevention Program is delivered in collaboration with ninth and eleventh grade health classes to educate students on identifying the symptoms of depression and suicidality in themselves or their friends, and encourages students to seek help. The school climate is very student-centered and supports unfettered access to school counselors. Students very often take advantage of the open access to counselors and 78.7 percent of students surveyed feel comfortable going to their counselor. School counselors meet with all students on their caseload individually at least once a year for the purposes of academic planning, but individual meetings between school counselors and students beyond this purpose occur with less regularity. As indicated in the Endicott survey, 38.3 percent of the student responders feel they meet with their counselors regularly. Pupil services consists of three full-time psychologists, one of whom is funded through the School Emergency Response to Violence (SERV) grant; one full-time social worker; and one student assistance counselor, who is shared between the middle and high schools. Pupil services facilitates several groups through the course of the school year. Often these groups are co-facilitated with other pupil service providers and/or high school counselors. Topics covered in these groups may include anxiety, organization, anger management, social skills, effective decision-making, empowerment, mentoring/positive choices/goal setting, bereavement, and study skills. Students are recommended by their parents, teachers, counselors, or placed into the groups on the basis of their Individualized Education Program (IEP). Meeting times usually occur once per rotation. The psychologists also provide consultation to parents/guardians, teachers, counselors and staff, and serve as liaisons with community providers. The school social worker also participates in meetings relating to student well being. In addition, the school social worker provides individual and small group academic based counseling to students, liaisons with community agencies to help support students and their families, conducts home visits, and processes financial hardship fee waiver requests. The student assistance counselor provides direct services to students, participates in team meetings, and consults with parents. Currently, multiple positions are funded through grants, which will end at the end of this school year. Naviance, a web-based program, is used regularly by the school counseling department. School counselors use the results of career, interest, personality, and learning style inventories and student portfolios to assist in the development of post-secondary goals. School counselors conduct an annual survey of parents and students at the end of each year to improve services and to gather information to help each student achieve the graduation standards. School counseling and pupil services staff consistently deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers, when needed. The high school's career center partners with 82 local businesses and individuals. In addition to career exploration experiences, the career center partners with the Northwest Regional Workforce Development Board to offer the Summer Youth Employment Program, which provides part-time summer employment to economically disadvantaged students and students with a documented disability. The school counselors also facilitate a student peer tutoring program. Students who complete 150 hours of community service tutoring hours receive an asterisk by their name in the graduation program and wear a specific cord with their regalia. Because school counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who deliver a comprehensive, written developmental program consistently to all students; meet

regularly with students to provide academic, college and career counseling; engage in some individual and group meetings with students; deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers; and often use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve and personalize services, students are supported in achieving the graduation standards.

## **Sources of Evidence**

- self-study
- student shadowing
- students
- department leaders
- school support staff
- Endicott survey
- school website

# Standard 6 Indicator 5

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## Conclusions

The school's health services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who often provide preventative health services and direct intervention services; use an appropriate referral process; conduct ongoing student health assessments; use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations (graduation standards). There are two full-time registered nurses. Most of the staff, 74.5 percent, and 87.2 percent of parents agree that health services is sufficiently staffed to appropriately handle the health care needs of the entire student body, including students who have special health needs, such as asthma, diabetes, severe allergies, and seizure disorders. Preventative and direct intervention services offered through the health office include individual, group, and family instruction on health matters; emergency assessments; and health services. Multiple flu clinics for staff, students, and families are offered in the fall. The high school holds an annual spring health fair to provide information and introduce activities to engage students in actively exploring health-promoting behaviors. The nurses also conduct mandatory and/or preventative trainings to staff, such as information about bloodborne pathogens. Nurses meet annually with classroom teachers to instruct them on EpiPen use and to review their students' specific health needs. The nurses use an appropriate referral process and consistently utilizes school and community resources to provide students with needed support such as local services or physician referrals when necessary. Students can be referred to multiple outside services, such as Samaritan Health Center, a free pediatrics center; Orthoprompt, a walk-in clinic for acute orthopedic care; Minute-Clinic and Urgent Care, walk-in care for routine and urgent medical care; and Planned Parenthood and Birthright for reproductive health services. There are a number of formal and informal ways that students access health services in the high school. As new students enter Newtown High School, they are asked to provide a completed state of Connecticut Health Assessment Record and a health history form. These forms are reviewed by the school nurse to plan for health problems that may impact students during the school day, to help ensure student health and safety during the school day, and to support academic success. When concerns exist, students can refer themselves to the nurse. Most students, 87.3 percent, are comfortable going to the school nurses. Teachers, counselors, and other school staff visit health services for a wide variety of complaints and also refer students to the nurse's office during the school day. The school nurses see 70 to 90 students on an average day. Nurses provide Individualized Healthcare Plans to classroom teachers regarding student health needs in the classroom. Emergency Health Care Plans are also provided for classroom teachers, transportation staff, and coaches. The nurses conduct ongoing student health assessments. An annual vision screening is conducted and there is scoliosis screening for ninth graders. The nurses also provide body mass index (BMI) screenings when requested. The nurses dispense medications and manage immunization records and physical exam records. Data on student immunization status and asthma is collected and submitted annually to the Connecticut Department of Public Health. The nurses work closely with the athletic department to establish student athletic eligibility and athletic injuries are tracked closely in cooperation with the school athletic trainer. There is a concussion management program. A baseline assessment administered to ninth and tenth grade student athletes provides the health services staff the ability to accurately provide concussion services. The school nurses also contact families, via telephone, after a student has missed five consecutive days of school. The nurses are active participants in Section 504 meetings, placement and planning team (PPT) meetings, and student re-entry meetings. Various types of assessment data are used, including feedback from the school community, to improve services to ensure that each student achieves the school's learning expectations. Every two years, the Youth Substance Use and Attitude Survey is administered to monitor trends in adolescent behaviors. The survey assesses students' use of alcohol or drugs as well as attitudes toward other risk-taking behaviors. It also measures risk and protective factors. A companion survey is also administered to parents with children in grades 7-12. Yearly, the district administers a school climate survey from the National School Climate Center to students, parents, and staff. In turn, the high school staff uses the results of these surveys to plan appropriate interventions and programming for students. School improvement plans are developed using the data from these surveys. Because the school's health services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who provide preventative health services and direct intervention services; use an appropriate referral process; conduct ongoing student health assessments; use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community; and improve services, each student can be supported in achieving the school's graduation requirements.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- students
- school support staff
- Endicott survey

# Standard 6 Indicator 6

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## Conclusions

Library/media services are integrated into curriculum and instructional practices in some areas and have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who are actively engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum; mostly provide a wide range of materials, technologies based on infrastructure availability, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum; ensure that the facility is often available and staffed for students and teachers before, during, and after school; are responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning; and regularly conduct ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations (graduation standards). The library has two full-time certified librarians who function as library media co-directors, teachers, and information specialists. Another full-time associate is responsible for collection material processing/ management and circulation, clerical work, office management, library supervision, and software/technical support. The library utilizes parent and student volunteers to shelve books and complete inventories. A library orientation is conducted with every ninth grade student through social studies classes. This orientation introduces students to the physical space of the library, the collection, and the online resources available through the library website. Also, the library media specialists work collaboratively with the freshmen English teachers to provide instruction as part of their information literacy research curriculum unit. The library media specialists regularly attend department meetings and use Rubicon Atlas to determine targeted outreach to teachers to integrate information literacy skills into the curricula. The library media specialists collaborate on a number of inquiry-based research projects throughout the school including a world religion project, a science, technology, engineering, math (STEM)-based science research project, an animal kingdom science project, an 11th grade Proteus project, help with creating citations using Modern Language Association (MLA) format, and an urban legend project using Photostory. While the print collection's average age is in the 1990s, there is an emphasis on providing a wide range of resources to meet a variety of needs. The library provides high interest–low vocabulary print materials and classroom videos-on-demand for students needing additional support. Based on the Endicott survey, 79 percent of parents and 76 percent of students agree the library provides a wide range of materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the curriculum. The library has 21,012 items, including 148 audiobooks, 68 eBooks, and 1,359 digital video discs (DVDs) and video home system (VHS) tapes. The library also contains 48 desktop computers and 24 laptops. The facility is available and staffed for students and teachers before, during, and after school. The library media center opens by 7:00 a.m. and remains open until 3:00 p.m. daily. Student feedback that was solicited from library media staff indicated that extended afternoon hours past the 3:00 p.m. closing time would be preferred. At times, during the day, the library media center is crowded and somewhat noisy with students who have a free period and those who have passes from study halls. As a result, information literacy classes sometimes need to be held in a computer lab or a classroom. While the in-school wireless network and infrastructure are problematic, the thorough, extensive library website resources provide around the clock access to a wealth of online academic and instructional resources such as an online library catalog, database collection, e-books, subject specific resource lists, research guides, and a virtual suggestion box. Certified personnel and support staff are responsive to student and staff interests and needs. For example, the results of the yearly district-administered school climate survey, administered to students, parents, and staff are used to improve services. The library staff provide ongoing group and individualized professional development opportunities for teachers in the use and integration of information and technology based upon need. The library staff engage readers and provide opportunities for feedback while fostering relationships by hosting a knitting club and both student and staff book clubs. The library media specialists use Twitter and bi-monthly emails as outreaches to the school community. While library/media services have a sufficient number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who are engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum; provide a wide range of materials, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum; ensure that the facility is available and staffed for students and teachers before, during, and after school; are responsive to students' interests and use ongoing assessments using relevant data to improve services; when the technology and infrastructure services are fully available, then students will be more successful integrating technology to support achievement of the graduation standards.



## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- students
- school support staff
- Endicott survey

# Standard 6 Indicator 7

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## Conclusions

Support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and English language learners (ELL), have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who collaborate in various ways with some teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations (graduation standards); provide extensive, inclusive learning opportunities for all students; and regularly perform ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations (graduation standards). One special education supervisor, eleven special education teachers, three school psychologists, one licensed social worker, one school assistance counselor, one speech and language therapist, one part-time occupational therapist, one part-time physical therapist, three behavioral therapists, and sixteen paraprofessionals service the needs of students needing support services. In addition, two full-time nurses, two transition coordinators, assistant principals, and school counselors also support these students in accordance with any Individual Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 or other plans. The school psychologists, social worker, and student assistance counselor meet individually with identified students to address their social and emotional needs. The school psychologists are responsible for participation in 504, PPT, and other meetings related to student well-being and, also provide crisis intervention when needed. The school psychologists administer and interpret psychological tests and write psychological evaluations. Support services staff consults and communicates with regular education teachers through Google forms, Google Docs, emails, referrals, personal contacts, and IEP and 504 meetings. All teachers have access to IEPs and 504 and ELL plans. Special education teachers service approximately 12 to 16 students each on their caseloads. The special education program provides varying degrees of support based upon the student's IEP, such as regular education classes with paraprofessional support and special education teacher support and an academic workshop class to support students in meeting their goals and objectives. The school also provides post-secondary transition services for special needs students in grades 9-12. Last year, the new administrative leadership team re-introduced the collaborative teaching model in core subject areas where a regular education teacher and a special education teacher instruct students within the classroom. The inclusion model allows both teachers to deliver content seamlessly. A part-time transition teacher focuses on post-secondary education as well as post-secondary employment interests. The transition teacher works with students on interest inventories, post-secondary education research, job shadowing experiences, and interview skills. There is a transition program for 18-21-year-olds with special needs. The program is based on individual needs of students, including support for all of the previous skills as well as job placement, job coaching, social skills, study skills, and independent living skills. There are many opportunities for meaningful, inclusive learning both during and after school. Fitness for Life is an elective course for students in grades 9-12 focused on fitness and nutrition, while providing support to students with special needs. The Tools for Living course provides opportunities for regular education students to mentor and tutor students with disabilities on the activities of daily living. A Unified Theater course for special needs students is also offered. There are three organized, inclusive, extra-curricular programs including Unified Sports, which consists of cheerleading, basketball, and soccer; and the Best Buddies program, which pairs students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in one-to-one friendships with typically developing peers. Best Buddies is the largest volunteer program at Newtown High School. The special education department, in cooperation with Nutmeg Cleaners, runs a dry cleaning business at the high school. Special needs students prepare invoices, collect payments, and deliver dry cleaning to staff participants. The Afternoon Program (TAP) is a support service for regular and special needs students who need alternative hours to the regular school day hours and a smaller setting to support their success with education. Although a vocational component is stated as a requirement, not all students are able to ascertain employment. Oddsseyware, a fully customizable online program, allows teachers to set and adjust unique learning paths tailored to individual student needs and to align with unique state standards and instructional scope and sequence. It is most often used as an option for credit restoration. In the event that a student is unable to attend school for an extended period of time, the school provides homebound tutoring commensurate with the student's particular needs. Certified educators are contracted to assist in the delivery of curriculum for students on homebound instruction when necessary. Currently, 221 students receive accommodations based on 504 plans; 38 plans are limited to allergies or anaphylactic reactions. Teachers are able to identify students who have a 504 plan from their PowerSchool class roster. All 504 plans are emailed to individual teachers at the

beginning of the year and quarterly to and new teachers on the student's schedule. One half-time administrative assistant is responsible for communicating to teachers for data collection and dissemination of the 504s. Teachers provide data for initial 504 requests and 504 annual reviews. All 504s are housed electronically in 504 Direct. All IEPs are stored electronically in IEP Direct and teachers are able to access their students' plans through PowerSchool. While there are no currently identified students as English language learners, there are a number of students that could benefit from additional support. Sometimes services are delivered through a consultation model that includes an ELL Plan. The student is rated on a level of 1-5; a level one student would require a compact curriculum; whereas, a level five student might not require a plan. The district's ELL instructor would meet with each student for approximately 30-45 minutes weekly and communicate with teachers about any accommodations or modifications needed for specific instruction based on the student's language skills. The instructor also discusses specific teaching strategies that could be implemented in the regular education classes and supports language acquisition through tutoring services and/or language acquisition classes. A high school assistant principal oversees ELL for the district, monitors individual student progress, and confers with the ELL instructor in order to assess strategies implemented and recommend further services as needed as part of the long-term support services provided. Additionally, as an assessment strategy, students may be referred to the Student Assistance Team (SAT). Teachers, school counselors, pupil services, department chairs, administrators and the school nurses communicate regularly and effectively to assess progress of identified students and formulate plans to support students as necessary. Support services staff frequently communicate directly with students and parents/guardians regarding progress. The support services staff uses online assessment data to improve and personalize school services to increase student learning and to support 21st century learning expectations. The high school also uses the results of the annual school climate survey to plan appropriate interventions and programming for students. Students' progress is measured by grade reports, formal and informal curriculum-based measurements, triennial testing. Furthermore, the staff evaluates student progress through district-wide testing as well as through standardized tests. Because support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners, provide an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who collaborate with teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to help students achieve the school's graduation standards; provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students; and perform ongoing assessment using relevant data to improve services, including feedback from the school community, each student receives adequate support to achieve the school's graduation standards.

# Standard 6 Commendations

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## Commendation

The variety of intervention and support programs provided for students

## Commendation

The collaborative outreach to various community agencies to support students

## Commendation

The comprehensive written developmental guidance curriculum, including the counselor workshop program

## Commendation

The welcoming atmosphere and open door policy of the school counseling department

## Commendation

The state of the art health care facility in which all students can access direct services with extensive preventative health measures

## Commendation

The extensive online collections, developed in part through the numerous methods of gathering feedback, to support teaching and learning and students' interests

## Commendation

The school's culture of inclusion for students identified with needs

# Standard 6 Recommendations

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## **Recommendation**

Ensure technology supports the delivery of the effective range of coordinated services for each student

## **Recommendation**

Ensure reliable technology in the library media center to support curricula

# Standard 7 Indicator 1

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## Conclusions

The community and the district's governing body provide adequate funding for ongoing professional development and curriculum revision; generally sufficient professional and support staff; sufficient equipment and instructional materials and supplies; but provide inconsistent funding for a wide range of programs and services and a full range of technology support. Newtown's town budget is currently \$111,735,513. Of the total town budget, 64 percent, or \$71,587,946, is allocated to the school district. During current difficult financial times, the district-wide budget increased by .42 percent for fiscal year 2015 (FY15) and .34 percent for FY16. According to the Endicott Survey, 44 percent of staff agree that the governing body provides dependable funding for a wide range programs and services. Programs and services in the Business Education and Applied Technology (BEAT) program rely heavily on money from the federally-funded Perkins Grant. Twenty-four percent of staff agrees that the funding is appropriate for professional and support staff. Due to a change in local and state mandates, the number of credits for graduation will increase, requiring more courses and broader program offerings must be developed. An art teaching position was recently cut, which impacted the number of sections offered in the humanities course and will impact the number of electives needed in the future. One of three full-time school psychologists at the high school is funded through the School Emergency Response to Violence (SERV) grant, which was received by the district following the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy and will end after the 2015-2016 school year. Professional development is funded through the high school budget and and the district-wide professional development budget. Teachers can participate in any professional development offered in or outside the district. Opportunities to assist with curriculum development and revision are available over the summer. Faculty who are able and interested may assist and are provided compensation for their service and time. There is one information technology (IT) person to handle all of the technical issues at the high school. There is a "bring your own device" (BYOD) initiative. However, the IT person is unable to service and provide maintenance for the BYOD initiative and sporadic connections make access limited. There is dissatisfaction with the lack of technological support and help teachers receive. The inconsistency and lack of reliability of wireless access often impacts instruction. Overall, despite the problems, teachers have the equipment they need to implement educational programs and overwhelming state they make do with what they have. There has been some professional development in the area of technology, but it is not ongoing. Teachers request instructional materials such as textbooks and other applicable items to their department chairs and generally receive most of their requests in a timely manner. However, at times, specific specialty programs such as the greenhouse, must wait through a few budget cycles to receive funding for materials. The community and the district's governing body provide dependable funding sufficient professional and support staff, ongoing professional development and curriculum revision, sufficient equipment, and sufficient instructional materials and supplies; however, when adequate funding for a wide range of school programs and services and a full range of technology support is available, then teaching and learning can be fully supported and enhanced appropriately to meet all graduation standards.

## Sources of Evidence

- teachers
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 7 Indicator 2

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## Conclusions

The school regularly develops, plans, and funds programs to ensure maintenance and repair of the building and school plant, to properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment, and to keep the school clean on a daily basis. According to the Endicott survey, 88.9 percent of the staff, 93.4 percent of students, and 96.1 percent of parents agree that the school is clean and well maintained. Newtown High School is immaculate and meticulously maintained inside and outside. There is a head custodian and a district-wide director of facilities and maintenance. Sixteen full-time custodians clean 362,131 square feet of building space every day, which is adequate to ensure that the building maintains a thoroughly clean appearance every day. The responsibilities and schedule are clearly outlined for custodial duties on the interior and exterior of the building and the grounds. The daily duties consist of cleaning every classroom, office and corridors, and drinking fountains, vacuuming, mopping, and sweeping. Custodians also maintain the football field, vending building and bathrooms, and the swimming pool area. Custodians also respond quickly to requests throughout the school day when a particular area needs attention. The head custodian communicates with staff via email to facilitate this process. Exterior chores consist of snow removal and clean-up after student sporting events. In addition, the facility is used for many extracurricular and community events and activities. There is a funding plan for maintenance of the building, equipment repair, and replacement as outlined in the plant operations and maintenance requested budget for 2014-2015. A total of \$78,363 was requested for maintenance overtime for the 2014-2015 school year, along with \$245,850 for building and site repair requests. An amount of \$20,000 was requested for equipment repairs this year and has been requested every year since 2013 for maintenance and repair on equipment that is for the betterment of the inside and outside of the building. At this time, there is not a detailed itinerary or future plan for the schedule of repairs to equipment. Because the school regularly develops, plans, and funds programs to ensure maintenance and repair of the building and school plant, to properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment, and to keep the school clean on a daily basis, the facility is conducive to teaching and learning.

# Standard 7 Indicator 3

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## Conclusions

The community funds and the school implements a long-range plan that addresses some programs and services, projected enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology and capital improvements. Teachers and administrators are involved in creating a strategic plan for the school that addresses curriculum, instruction, and assessment, professional development, technology support, equipment, and integration, facility needs, and community involvement. The district also has a strategic plan. Enrollment projections indicate a consistent decrease in enrollment over the next five years, with the projected enrollment dropping from 1,723 in the school year 2013-2014 to 1,480 in 2019-2020. However, because more courses for graduation are going to be required, planning for staffing will become part of the long-range plan. In addition, following the tragedy, the Newtown Public School District received two federal School Emergency Response to Violence (SERV) grants for \$7,000,000 each for the district to be paid out over the course of three years; one was from the Department of Justice and the other was from the United States Department of Education (USDOE). Much of the money provided by the Department of Justice went to the security of the school buildings and procedures. The money provided by the USDOE will dissolve in June of 2016. Currently, district and school administrators and the board of education are seeking alternate funding sources to compensate for the loss of the grants and the personnel currently paid under those grants, in particular, a school psychologist at the high school. There is a significant need cited beyond the operational plan, which will no longer be funded through the remaining \$250,000 of the USDOE grant. A five-year technology plan with long-range goals and action steps is written. Some of the goals, such as the BYOD program, online course materials, and implementation of online classes have been integrated into the school. However, there is limited funding to implement all the initiatives fully, including the corresponding professional development. There is a five-year capital improvement plan. A new wing adding a needed 88,000 square feet to the inside of the school and paving outside the school are completed. Renovations are scheduled to begin on the auditorium next year for needed upgrades and to ensure Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance. The current cost estimate is approximately \$3,600,000. Newtown High School is also in need of a roof restoration for the old section of the building. The proposal, slated to possibly run next year, includes laying a high grade plastic over the pre-existing roof, at a cost of \$1,600,000 million dollars, with a ten-year warranty. There are long-range plans to address the bleachers in the stadium, flooring in the lobby, and the generator. While many needs have been addressed, when the community can sufficiently fund and the school can consistently implement a long-range plan that addresses all programs and services, projected enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements, then teaching and learning will be more fully supported.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey



# Standard 7 Indicator 4

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## Conclusions

The vast majority of faculty and all building administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget. At the beginning of the school year, department chairpersons receive the budget preparation manual for the upcoming year. Enclosed in the budget preparation manual is a calendar that provides specific due dates for budget requests. Requests from teachers are collected by department chairs, who then prioritize items and create departmental budgets. The department chairpersons and building administrators examine the entire Newtown High School budget and make collective decisions on reductions and additions regarding supplies and materials. Program budgets are also considered and reviewed by the building administrators. Once the principal finalizes the proposal, it is forwarded to the superintendent. When the budget is finalized by town, the principal and department chairpersons are responsible for the implementation of budget allocations to ensure that high priority needs are met. The budget is accessed through the Phoenix system, an online portal, that shows the amount encumbered by a department, the amount spent, and the amount left per department line item. Requisitions are reviewed by the business director for approval. Because of the high involvement of faculty and building administrators in the development and implementation of the budget, high priority items are included and teaching and learning needs are supported.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership

# Standard 7 Indicator 5

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## Conclusions

The school site and plant consistently support the delivery of high quality school programs and services. Newtown High School often has a relatively comfortable physical climate throughout the school year. The new wing created more classroom space, more space for students during their free periods, additional lunch space, one computer lab, and centralized departmental office areas, conducive to greater collaboration between teachers and availability to students. The new wing has stable climate control for teachers and students; whereas, in some areas of the building, the inside temperature fluctuates depending on the outdoor climate. Two separate hot water boilers heat the new and old sections of the school. They have been converted to natural gas to reduce fuel expenses; however, a 20,000 gallon oil tank is held in storage and can be dispersed to other schools in the district. The reduced maintenance for the gas boilers and efficiency has saved money for the district. The school also has a stand-by diesel powered electrical generator that has a 20,000 gallon fuel reserve. There are 26 bathrooms for students along with 26 other bathrooms for faculty, preschool, coaches, and the handicapped. There are two additional bathrooms located at the football stadium. The graphics program area has an area large enough for students to take school and community jobs, such as t-shirt making and sign design. A photography studio is large enough to house 18 computers and includes 12 digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) cameras, a green screen, and camera stabilizers for shooting videos. The school offers students computer repair jobs that provide them with an opportunity to fix and repair electronics. The automotive program houses two car lifts and students can repair vehicles for teachers and people in the community. Fourteen science labs have adequate room and facilities for physics, chemistry, and the earth science. The library media center is a 10,000 square foot area, which houses 48 student computers and a maximum capacity of 148 students. The band and choral rooms can house up to 55 students each. The lecture hall can hold up to 150 people. There are a total of seven computer labs with 25-30 computers each. There are separate offices for guidance. There are six separate conference rooms for teachers that allow students to go for extra help as needed in those subject areas. The culinary program has a full-service kitchen. The newly furnished 3,200 square feet cafetorium has a service area and can hold and feed 175 students. There is a second, older cafeteria which is 7,312 square feet that has a full-service kitchen and can service 600 students. There is also a patio area outside to allow students to go outside in nice weather. Although the cafetorium has alleviated the problem of students going to the other end of the building for the cafeteria, some students are consistently late to various parts of the building, even with a five-minute passing time. There is a newly renovated 12,675 square foot gymnasium that can seat 1,500 people. The school houses a competition swimming pool with seating that is Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant. There is a 2,000 seat capacity football stadium, which has synthetic surface that was put down in 2010. This field is surrounded by a rubberized six-lane track with a shot put and pole vaulting facility. A field house serves people attending sporting events. The field also serves for soccer, field hockey, and boys and girls lacrosse. There are baseball and softball natural grass fields and an over-sized multi-use field for practicing various sports. Lighting was added to the field for night-time practices. A new four-court tennis facility is adjacent to the practice field. There is a 2,000 square foot greenhouse for students to use. The parking areas around the school have 683 spaces, with 374 allocated to students. According to the Endicott survey, 84.9 percent of students, 82.5 percent of parents, and 69.9 percent of staff agree that Newtown High School adequately supports programs. As a result of the maintenance, condition, and enhancement of the school site and physical plant, high quality school programs and services are supported.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students

- parents
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- Endicott survey

# Standard 7 Indicator 6

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## Conclusions

Newtown High school consistently maintains documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. The director of buildings and grounds regularly monitors compliance. All inspections are completed in a timely manner. All documentation regarding compliance with all laws and regulations is maintained in the facilities office. Rooftop ventilators are inspected quarterly and filter changes are made. The fire alarms and fire suppression system passed their inspections. Fire extinguishers are inspected semi-annually. Fire drills are held routinely. Boilers and elevators are inspected annually. The generator is serviced annually and the emergency generator is tested weekly. Chemical disposal from science labs was last done in 2011 and another disposal is scheduled for the 2015-2016 school year. An itemized list of chemicals to be disposed is kept by the lab technician. There are handicapped parking areas and all parts of the building are handicapped accessible with the exception of the auditorium. However, the upcoming renovation will provide access and compliance in accordance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The cafeteria staff maintains appropriate certifications and the food areas are in compliance with fire, health, and safety regulations. The physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations creating a safe, healthy, accessible environment for all those using the school.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- student shadowing
- facility tour
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- Endicott survey

# Standard 7 Indicator 7

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## Conclusions

Most of the professional staff actively engage parents and families as partners in each student's education and occasionally reach out specifically to those families who have been less connected with the school. According to the Endicott survey, 80 percent of teachers agree that they actively engage parents and families as partners in each child's education. Some teachers have created student learning goals around student and parent communication, including sending emails home for academic, civic, or social commendations. School staff also communicates to parents and families through School Messenger, social media, and school and teacher websites, including Naviance. However, school data indicates many parents are not taking advantage of the online opportunities such as Naviance; and, 60 percent of parents agree that the staff engages families as partners in their child's education. The student/parent portal in PowerSchool is utilized to communicate students' academic progress and school records. There are two open house nights and multiple evenings and afternoons for parent/teacher conferences to enable flexibility to help increase attendance at these events. The school counselors invite parents to presentations discussing their services to engage parents in helping ensure their children's academic success and preparation for post-secondary planning. The principal sponsors a monthly breakfast to bring parents into the school. The superintendent solicits input through parent and community forums. Although most professional staff actively engage parents and families as partners in each student's education and attempts are made to reach out specifically to those families who have been less connected with the school, ensuring that all families are encouraged and reached will better support student learning and the goal to further engage parents as partners in education will be enhanced.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- parents
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 7 Indicator 8

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## Conclusions

Newtown High School actively develops productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning. According to the Endicott survey, 72 percent of parents, and 73 percent of staff agree that Newtown High School is highly receptive to parent involvement. Parents are informed of academic, athletic, and other school events in a variety of ways. Regular newsletters go home from several departments, as well as mailing on specific programs sent to homes. The Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) for Newtown High School maintains communication with parents via a newsletter and monthly meetings. The PTSA also sponsors assemblies for students and parents throughout the year on initiatives such as an Underage Drinking Forum, which is geared to educate both parents and students on the dangers of underage drinking and drug use. The athletic department has a booster club for every school team, resulting in increased parent involvement. Students at Newtown High School are provided with opportunities to partner with some local businesses and colleges and universities. Students are involved in the community through various ways and community service activities including but not limited to contributing to the food pantry, sponsoring clothing drives, fundraising for cancer, March of Dimes, and Wounded Warrior, collecting Toys for Tots, and hosting a senior citizens' night. Veterans are invited in for a luncheon and concert. College and Career Pathways program is an initiative funded by the federal Carl D. Perkins Grant, which is designed to enhance career and technical education by creating meaningful pathways from high schools to colleges and careers. The career center provides students with opportunities for job shadowing for one day and internships outside of school for 30 hours. Seventy students participated in internships last year and 40 students have already signed up for internships during the 2015-2016 school year. Students are able to put in requests for the placement or type of career in which they would like to intern. Internships opportunities include, but are not limited to, the other schools in the Newtown Public School District, New Milford Orthopedic Associates, Church Hill Physical Therapy, JK Architecture, and Miller Motor Cars. The special education teachers work in conjunction with Nutmeg Cleaners, providing opportunities for special education students to work in and run many aspects of Nutmeg Dry Cleaners. The Newtown Greenery, run by students, cultivates the plants, then sells floral arrangements and plants. Students work with town government officials to learn about the governing boards. The Junior/Senior Project provides an opportunity for the student to develop a career-oriented relationship with a community professional, who is the student's mentor, in the student's area of interest. A branch of Newtown Savings Bank is located in the high school. Students are able to open bank accounts and conduct transactions while at school. Because of this partnership with Newtown Savings Bank, three student work positions have been added. From those three students, one is able to work in a paid summer job. The Newtown Center for International Education, an initiative of the Newtown Public Schools, has partnered with schools in Europe and Asia, the Asia Society, the Japan Society, Yale University, Boston University, University of Bridgeport, the State Department of Education, community members, and corporations. Over 200 staff members, 100 students, and 100 families have either traveled to a sister school, hosted international students, or volunteered in another capacity. The culinary classes provide catering services for school and community functions. Culinary arts students are able to earn 10.5 credits through Johnson and Wales University in Providence, RI, after successfully completing the Advanced Culinary Arts course. Naugatuck Valley Community College offers credit for various courses. Second and third year Applied Science Research students have the opportunity to receive four science credits each year from State University of New York (SUNY) Albany's Science Research. Because Newtown High School actively develops productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships in accordance with their core values and beliefs, student learning is supported and strengthened.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 7 Commendations

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## **Commendation**

The immaculate, safe facility which fully supports teaching and learning

## **Commendation**

The active involvement of administrators and staff in the development and implementation of the budget

## **Commendation**

The updates made to the school site and physical plant that provide and augment many varied opportunities for teaching and learning

## **Commendation**

The plethora of strong community, business, and higher education partnerships that provide extensive, authentic, real-life opportunities for students



# Standard 7 Recommendations

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## **Recommendation**

Provide dependable and adequate funding for a wide range of school programs and services, and a full range of technology to support teaching and learning

## **Recommendation**

Develop and implement long-range plans for programs and services, future enrollment, and staffing needs

## **Recommendation**

Ensure that professional staff further reach out to engage parents as partners in education, specifically to those families who have been less connected to the school

# **FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES**

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This comprehensive evaluation report reflects the findings of the school's self-study and those of the visiting committee. It provides a blueprint for the faculty, administration, 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 administration yearly of progress made addressing visiting committee recommendations.

Since it is in the best interest of the students that the citizens of the district become aware of the strengths and limitations of the school and suggested recommendations for improvement, the Commission requires that the evaluation report be made public in accordance with the Commission's Policy on Distribution, Use, and Scope of the Visiting Committee Report.

A school's initial/continued accreditation is based on satisfactory progress implementing valid recommendations of the visiting committee and others 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 in the Follow-Up Program, the Commission requires that the principal submit routine Two- and Five-Year Progress Reports documenting the current status of all evaluation report recommendations, with particular detail provided for any recommendation which may have been rejected or those items on which no action has been taken. In addition, responses must be detailed on all recommendations highlighted by the Commission in its notification letters to the school. School officials are expected to have completed or be in the final stages of completion of all valid visiting committee recommendations by the time the Five-Year Progress Report is submitted. The Commission may request additional Special Progress Reports if one or more of the Standards are not being met in a satisfactory manner or if additional information is needed on matters relating to evaluation report recommendations or substantive changes in the school.

To ensure that it has current information about the school, the Commission has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Commission within sixty days (60) of occurrence any substantive change which negatively impacts the school's adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The report of substantive change must describe the change itself and detail any impact which 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 Two- and Five-Year Progress Reports and/or the Annual Report which is required of each member school to ensure that the Commission office has current statistical data on the school.

The Commission urges school officials to establish a formal follow-up program at once to review and implement all findings of the self-study and valid recommendations identified in the evaluation report. An outline of the Follow-Up Program is available in the Commission's Accreditation Handbook, which was given to the school at the onset of the self-study. Additional direction regarding suggested procedures and reporting requirements is provided at Follow-Up Seminars offered by Commission staff following the on-site visit.

The visiting committee would like to express thanks to the community for the hospitality and welcome. The school community completed an exemplary self-study that clearly identified the school's strengths and areas of need. The time and effort dedicated to the self-study and preparation for the visit ensured a successful accreditation visit.

# **SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY**

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## **NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES Commission on Public Secondary Schools**

Principals of member schools must report to the Commission within sixty (60) days of occurrence any substantive change in the school which has a negative impact on the school's ability to meet any of the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The report of a substantive change must describe the change itself as well as detail the impact on the school's ability to meet the Standards. The following are potential areas where there might be negative substantive changes which must be reported:

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

# Roster of Team Members

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## Chair

**Dr. Kathleen Montagano** - New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.

## Assistant Chair

**Dr. Richard Sanzo** - Wilton High School

## Visiting Committee Members

**Michael Aftowski** -

**Mechelle Berardo** - Bacon Academy

**Dan Donovan** - Danbury High School

**Patricia Gonzalez** - Danbury High School

**Kristian Kuegler** - Watertown High School

**Pam Lehn** - Glastonbury High School

**Andrew Marchand** - Torrington High School

**Cara McConnell** - Amity Regional Senior High School

**Dennis Mennillo** - Naugatuck High School

**Michael Merati** - Ridgefield High School

**Dr. Ellen W. Solek** -

**Debra St. Jean** - Newington High School

**Courtenay Trahan** - Fairfield Ludlowe High School

**Jacqueline Vernacchio** - Fairhaven High School