

**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

**COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**



***REPORT OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE***

**Norwalk High School**

**Norwalk, Connecticut**

March 22 – March 25, 2015

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# STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS

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

The Committee on Public Secondary Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges considers this visiting committee report of Norwalk High School to be a privileged document submitted by the Committee 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 Norwalk High School in terms of the Committee'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.

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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 Public Schools which is comprised of the Committee on Public Secondary Schools (CPSS), the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions (CTCI), and the Commission on Public Elementary and Middle Schools (CPEMS), and the Commission on American and International Schools Abroad (CAISA).

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's 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 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 Norwalk High School, a committee of 7 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. In addition to faculty members, the self-study committees included 13 teachers.

The self-study of Norwalk High School extended over a period of 18 school months from 2013 to 2014.

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 mission, 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, Norwalk 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 Norwalk High School. The Committee members spent four days in *Norwalk, Connecticut* 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. Since the evaluators represented public schools, central office administrators, building administrators, classroom teachers, guidance counselors, and library media specialists, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Norwalk High School.

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 37 ½ hours shadowing 15 students for a half day
- a total of 64 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 parenthesis 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 Norwalk High School.

## **Norwalk High School School and Community Summary 2015**

Norwalk, Connecticut, is a twenty-three square mile coastal city located in Fairfield County in the southwestern part of the state. When including Norwalk's islands, the city's area is 36.3 square miles. Settled by "thirty spirited families" in 1651, Norwalk eventually became a city in 1913. It is surrounded by New Canaan and Wilton to the north, Long Island Sound to the south, Westport and Long Island Sound to the east, and New Canaan and Darien to the west. The diverse community of Norwalk is comprised of 68.7% White, 14.2% African American, 0.4% American Indian and Alaska Native, 4.8% Asian, 0.1% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, 24.3% Hispanic or Latino, and 2.8% of two or more races (U.S. Census, 2010). Its estimated total population for 2012 is 87,190 (U.S. Census, 2010). From 2000 to 2010, there was approximately a 1% increase in the city's population from 82,951 to 85,603.

Norwalk is home to a number of varied businesses. Based on the generation of sales tax, Norwalk's retail sector is the fifth largest in Connecticut. The retail sector includes businesses such as Walmart, Costco, Home Depot, and Kohl's. Rapidly growing technology companies like Priceline.com, WebMediaBrands, Adepra, and Dattco Inc. are also located in Norwalk. Major employers in the city include Norwalk Health Services and Norwalk Hospital, Stew Leonard's, MBI, Diageo North America, Bridgewater Associates, and Hewitt Associates. There are also a number of companies who maintain their headquarters in Norwalk such as Pepperidge Farm, XEROX Corporation, Knipschildt Chocolatier, and Graham Capital Management.

As of 2012, the Norwalk unemployment rate was 7.0% in comparison to Fairfield County's 7.6% and the state's 8.4%. Norwalk reports a median family income of \$76,384 with a poverty level of 8%. Between 2008 and 2012, 89.6% of adults 25 years or older earned a high school diploma or higher and 40% or more attained a Bachelor's Degree or higher. Between 2008 and 2012, the median home price in Norwalk was \$440,700 compared to the state's \$285,900.

The approved FY 2013-2014 budget for the City of Norwalk is \$309,427,949 of which \$162,271,864 was allocated for education, representing 52.4% of the total budget. Of the \$162,271,864 allocated for education, \$10,632,868 comes from non-tax revenue and \$151,638,996 comes from tax revenue.

The Norwalk Public School District includes twelve elementary schools, four middle schools, two high schools and one alternative high school. Additionally, there are several private and parochial schools located in Norwalk, so the estimated student enrollment in all schools is 12,136. Of those students enrolled in public and independent schools, 11,078 were enrolled in the Norwalk Public Schools in 2013-2014. It was not possible to determine how many Norwalk high school age students attended private or independent schools given the number of non-public schools present in Fairfield County. Norwalk Public Schools has experienced multiple changes in leadership over the last ten years, including seven superintendents and three principals of Norwalk High School. Faculty has expressed concern about consistency.

Students from Naramake, Wolfpit, Marvin, Silvermine, and Columbus Magnet Elementary Schools feed into West Rocks and Nathan Hale Middle Schools. Students from these two middle schools make up the student body at Norwalk High School. Norwalk High School's total student population in 2013-2014 was 1,544. In the 2013-2014 school year, there were 414 freshmen, 398 sophomore, 384 junior, and 348 senior students enrolled. The school's average per pupil expenditure has remained relatively stable as it was \$15,639 in 2012-2013 and \$15,509 in 2010-2011. The school's student population in 2013-2014 was 44.49% White/Hawaiian, 30.05% Hispanic, 20.40% Black, 3.89% Asian American, .19% American Indian, and .97% multi-racial. Student enrollment at Norwalk High School was 1,531 in 2011-2012, 1,539 in 2012-2013, and 1,544 in 2013-2014, showing a slight increase in each year. It is staffed by 104.6 full-time equivalent teachers, 6 full-time administrators, and 1 Library Media Specialist. Additionally, student support professionals include guidance counselors (8), a social workers (1.8), psychologist (1), speech therapist (.8), and nurses (1.7). There are additional support personnel, which include a library clerk (1), Special Education aides (14.496), secretaries (4.721), clerks (4.706), instructional aide (.733), School-to-Career liaison (.5), and custodians (9.5).

Currently, Norwalk High School follows a rotating eight period schedule where one period is dropped each day. Each period is forty-six minutes long with four minutes passing time in between classes. There are three separate lunch shifts each day during time slot 5, and there are 6 minutes between each lunch shift. There is a 25 minute advisory period each week.

Norwalk High School offers college-level work in Art History, Studio Art, Biology, Calculus, Chemistry, Computer Science, Macro-Economics, English Literature and Composition, European History, Government and Politics, Comparative French Language, Physics, Psychology, Spanish Language, Spanish Literature, Statistics, and United States History. Cumulative class rank is calculated using all subjects based on a 4-point scale. Honors courses are weighted with 50 additional quality points and Advanced Placement courses are weighted with 1.0 additional quality points.

The graduating class of 2013 totaled 324 students: 62% (202) of graduating seniors enrolled in 4 year colleges; 35% (112) of graduating seniors enrolled in 2-year colleges; 15% (5) of graduating seniors enrolled in technical schools. In total, 98% of Norwalk High School's graduating class enrolled in higher education programs. The percentage of students matriculating into the armed forces and various occupations was 1% each. The average SAT scores for students attending a four-year college was: 539 in Reading; 532 in Math; and 553 in Writing. The two-year average drop rate is less than 9% while the overall graduation rate consistently falls in the 96% or above range.

Norwalk High School offers a comprehensive Developmental Guidance Program in which all students are given access to the *Naviance* career and college informational database which serves as a diagnostic tool for college and career planning. The Developmental Guidance Program of Norwalk High School is an individually designed program that provides guidance and counseling services responding to the developmental needs of all students: post-secondary planning; personal, social, and emotional development; as well as career and vocational planning. The program recognizes the unique qualities of each individual student and provides students with opportunities to acquire or improve competencies in the areas of school adjustment and achievement, career planning and exploration, decision making and knowledge of self and others. The Student Success Plans (SSP) are linked to *Naviance* as well. Additionally, Norwalk High School has one School-to-Career Counselor which supports the school's wide-ranging School-to-Career Program (see Norwalk High School website) with annual events such as *The Career Expo*, *Job Shadow*, and *The Volunteer Expo*.

The Norwalk Early College Academy (NECA) which has a partnership with IBM and Norwalk Community College (NCC) began in 2014-2015. The 90 students enrolled take college and high school level courses. Each student will leave high school with an associate's degree and an interview with IBM. This is the first P-Tech Model in Connecticut.

The Senior Internship program started in the spring of 2014. This program takes place during the last month of the student's senior year. Students are able to experience life outside of school by participating in a range of business opportunities throughout the community to solidify their interest in a certain field and cultivate the possibilities of other careers.

The guidance and certified support staff have created a variety of programs that support at-risk students both academically and socially. *The Robert E. Applebee Health Center* provides on-site counseling services with a psychiatrist, social worker, and nurse practitioner available to students during school hours. Norwalk High School's at-risk youth programs also include the *Juvenile Review Board* (JRB) and a myriad of support groups such as *Al-A-Teen*, *The Healthy Choices Group*, *The At-Risk Boys/Girls Group*, and *The Bereavement Group* (a partnership with the *DEN for Grieving Kids based in Darien, CT*). In the area of academic development and college planning, Norwalk High School offers SAT prep classes, regular college fair and visitation activities, Financial Aid Support and College Planning events open to all students and parents. Norwalk High School partners with *The Gaffney Foundation* to assist first-generation college bound students with additional academic support enabling students to thrive in a competitive college environment. The *College Representation Program* features 115 colleges with representatives who visit on-site and offer college application support and college recruitment opportunities.

Norwalk High School is proud of its more than 50 clubs and 10 athletic teams. The annual *Norwalk High School Club Fair* is school-wide and provides students the opportunity to sign up and experience the vast array of school-based clubs and extracurricular activities. Faculty members serve as faculty advisors for these student run-programs which include the following: *Bears Beating Cancer*, *The Norwalk High School Student Government*, *The African American Culture Club*, *The Spanish Club*, *Ambassadors Club*, *Spectrum [Gay, Straight Alliance Club]*, *Garden to Table*, *The Earth Club*, *First Robotics Club*, *Teen Choice*, *American Sign Language*, *Future Business Leaders*, *The Paw Print*, *Digital Music/Media Club*, *Technovations [a female-oriented technology*

*design club*], *The National Honor Society*, *The Spanish National Honor Society*, *The Drama Club* [which produces the annual spring musical production of well-known Broadway favorites such as *Les Miserable*, *Hair Spray*, *Guys and Dolls*], and *BROWN* [a community service club serving the greater Norwalk, CT area]—[for a complete list of clubs and extracurricular activities see the Norwalk High School website]. *The Yearbook and Magazine Publishing* course is an English elective and school-wide club in which students collaborate with their classmates to create the school's yearbook, arts-and-literature magazine, and monthly *Fact Finder* parent newsletter. Students report, write and edit personality profiles, features and story packages in the style of popular magazines.

The *Norwalk High School Marching Bears* ranks as one of the best marching bands in the state of Connecticut and nation. This highly-decorated marching band has earned top honors in regional and national competitions. Norwalk High School has a competitive athletic program that represents state and conference champions in multiple boys and girls sports. Additionally, *The Bear Country News* is a student-produced video news program which highlights the world of Norwalk High School at large. *The Bear Country News* is uploaded regularly to the Norwalk High School homepage and viewed by all students during the Advisory period. This creative video news program is the centerpiece of the *Broadcast Journalism* course curriculum.

Norwalk High School understands the delicate balance between academic excellence and social responsibility and is committed to offering a dynamic student-centered curriculum rooted in 21<sup>st</sup> century innovation, communication, and collaboration.

# **Norwalk High School**

## **Core Values and Beliefs Statement**

Norwalk High School, a community of students, teachers, administrators and families, embraces its diversity and encourages intellectual curiosity.

We value a safe, accepting culture rooted in a rigorous, relevant curriculum rich with technology and artistic expression.

We must challenge students to become knowledgeable, ethical citizens capable of making independent and collaborative decisions in real-world settings.

We must prepare students for the social, civic, and technological demands of the 21st century in order to effectively participate in an ever-changing global society.

**COMMITTEE ON  
PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

**TEACHING AND LEARNING  
STANDARDS**

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**CORE VALUES, BELIEFS, AND LEARNING  
EXPECTATIONS**

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**CURRICULUM**

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**INSTRUCTION**

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**ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT  
LEARNING**

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## Teaching and Learning Standard

# 1

## Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

*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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, as well as district and school community priorities.

The Norwalk High School community engaged in a collaborative and inclusive process informed by best practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning. In 2009, the Norwalk High School Advisory Council was convened in order to develop a mission statement that would guide the teaching and learning of the professional staff and students of Norwalk High School (NHS). The council was comprised of the building principal, a housemaster, a teacher, a department chair, a student, and a school counselor. The work of the council resulted in a mission statement that would lay the foundation for what would later become the core values, beliefs and learning expectations for the students of NHS. The professional staff was afforded many opportunities to engage in dialogue about what was important to the NHS community and to formulate a mission statement that represented the beliefs and vision of the school as a whole. After considering different versions of the mission statement, the professional staff adopted a mission statement in 2010. That fall, two parents, an additional department chair and another student joined the advisory council to assist in drawing a connection between the newly adopted mission statement and the NEASC Standards. NHS engaged a district consultant in the collaborative process and a mission statement was created and submitted to the superintendent for his review. The superintendent made a recommendation for the advisory council to consider a stronger focus on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, rigor and diversity and from that a mission statement for Norwalk High School was adapted and adopted. In 2012, the core values and beliefs statement was proposed to each department for feedback and was later adopted by Norwalk's Board of Education in 2012. At the end of this process, the committee developed the school's core values and beliefs, and seven academic competencies including, academic, civic and social domains. The core values, beliefs and expectations for learning are evident in the acronym that is the symbol of NHS's school mascot, the B.E.A.R.S., Behave ethically and be accountable, Engage in school activities and in the community, Academic preparedness for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Respect for self and diversity, Safety at all times. These core values and beliefs are also reflected in wall murals throughout the school building designed and artistically reflected by NHS students. A Nellie Mae grant was awarded to NHS and the funding has been allocated to provide in-service trainings to the professional staff to support teaching and learning as reflected through the core values and beliefs about learning. Staff visited other Connecticut school districts to witness best practices and to help establish a strong approach to bringing the core values, beliefs and expectations alive within the school community. Most of the professional staff of NHS have embraced and incorporated the core values, beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations into their curriculum and instruction. As a result of an extensive, collaborative and inclusive process in the

development of a mission statement that is reflective of the NHS community, the school's core values, beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations have been born and adopted by the professional staff and students of NHS. (students, teacher interviews, Endicott survey, self-study, district website)

Norwalk High School has 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations that address academic, social and civic competencies and are measured through the seven school-wide rubrics that align with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. Norwalk High School began addressing the skills and expectations for the students through eleven domains that it identified as important to the success and preparation of Norwalk High School students. From the eleven domains, ten analytic rubrics were developed. The professional staff piloted the rubrics that were created by individual departments to measure specific content areas during the 2013-2014 school year. After the initial implementation of the rubrics, the professional staff, determined that ten rubrics were unwieldy and could not effectively measure those skills that were deemed most important. The school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations address three academic expectations: effective literacy skills by communicating through reading, writing and speaking; critical thinking and effective problem solving and using technology both ethically and effectively to enhance learning; and three social expectations; work effectively as a collaborative member of a group, participate responsibly in education and communicate an understanding and empathy for global perspectives; and lastly one civic expectation, the ability to be contributing members of the community. These expectations are now measured through seven analytic rubrics that have been embraced by key content areas. The Endicott survey reveals that 63.1 percent of NHS students recognize that the analytic rubrics are a tool used to assess their learning while 81.6 percent of parents are aware that the rubrics measure the school's identified learning expectations and outline what students need to be able to do in order to demonstrate proficiency. Through the development and implementation of school-wide analytic rubrics, Norwalk High School communicates the school's core values, beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations providing clear and measureable indicators to support all students in reaching their highest level of achievement. (self-study, teacher interviews, student work, students, department leaders, Endicott survey)

The Norwalk High School's core values, beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school, drive most curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the classroom and are in the early stages of guiding school policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations. Norwalk High School's core values and beliefs are embedded in many of the school's program initiatives and reflected in the culture of the school through extracurricular activities such as advisory,

Bear Country News, Bear Pack, the marching band, theater performances, multiple sports teams, and Link Crew. Students use technology to effectively enhance their education for both credit recovery and extended learning. The students have taken the initiative to develop practical project based models such as BCN, Project Explore and Culinary Arts that have enhanced their learning and the culture of the school community through television and food services as well as a newly decorated and furnished Bear Café that incorporates the related arts of music and art. Students are provided the opportunity to take responsibility for their learning through programs such as ROTC and NECA which prepare students for early college and career after high school. Students demonstrate school spirit and ownership for the school community as a whole through their involvement both in and outside of the school. Professional staff has modified instructional practices, revised assessment techniques and are in the process of designing curriculum maps in some content areas. Other content areas are actively implementing essential skills and enduring understandings that align with the core values and beliefs of the school. The incorporation of data team meetings for assessment review, and consideration of a more effective schedule to meet the growing needs of the students are those policies, procedures and decisions that are being driven by the school's core values, beliefs and learning expectations. The development of a rigorous curriculum is the focus and target of Norwalk High School professional staff with a clear focus on the collaborative work that has been completed. As a result of an active and reflective approach to the implementation of the school's core values, belief and expectations, the culture of the school, the curriculum, instruction and assessment as well as the policies, procedures, and decisions will effectively support all students in successfully accessing the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (classroom observations, panel presentations, facility tour, board of education, Endicott survey, self-study, student work, district website)

Norwalk High School has actively participated in the process of review and revision of its core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations in response to multiple data sources as well as to district and school community priorities. The institution of Instructional Data Teams (IDTs) at Norwalk High School has allowed the building administrators and professional staff to be reflective and to make informed decisions related to teaching and learning. The IDTs are scheduled to meet everyday throughout the school year. The daily schedule was specifically designed to allot time for teams to look at data and constantly to measure the students' progress at meeting the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Norwalk High School was responsive at end of the pilot year 2012-2013, when ten rubrics were used to address the domains that the advisory council identified as most important to the success of the students by blending and or eliminating the rubrics to form seven rubrics that could better be

implemented and measured. Data is reported to the administration after each IDT and the administration uses that data to assess progress and next steps. The thoughtful adoption of certain rubrics by specific content areas to measure what all students should know and be able to do informs instruction and focuses support for students in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. For example, the use of the oral communication rubric in world languages focuses the students' learning on developing the skills necessary to effectively communicate in a second language. By allotting responsibility of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to various content areas that can most directly apply those skills, the school is able to consistently measure student performance in meeting all of the learning expectations. The district's strategic plan emphasizes a culture of accountability, building knowledge skills and capacity and new learning environments for all. The continuous alignment of the core values, beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations with the vision of the district's strategic plan will encourage opportunity for communication with central office, the school and the community. Through the consistent use of data along with research-based best practices the professional staff of Norwalk High School will afford their students the opportunity to find success in meeting 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations that will prepare them to effectively participate in ever-changing global society. (district website, teacher interviews, self-study, Standard subcommittee members)

### **Commendations:**

1. The collaborative and inclusive process used by the Norwalk school community to identify core values and beliefs
2. The time dedicated to researching and ensuring that all stakeholders in the decision process had a clear understanding of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills prior to determining the school communities' expectations for learning
3. The use of the acronym B.E.A.R.S. to increase awareness of the core values and beliefs
4. The creation of the school governance council to assist the school administration in making programmatic and operational changes to improve school achievement
5. The use of Instructional Data Teams (IDTs) to consistently gather data that will inform instruction

### **Recommendations:**

1. Develop a long-term plan to identify curriculum, instruction, assessment, policies, decisions, and resource allocations that require alignment of the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations
2. Ensure the use of research-based best practices to review, revise and influence the core values, beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
3. Develop a long-term plan to regularly review and revise the core values, beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations that is inclusive of a variety of stakeholders.

## 2

## Curriculum

*The written and taught curriculum is designed to result in all students achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations for student learning. The written curriculum is the framework within which a school aligns and personalizes the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

## **Conclusions**

In a number of core content courses the curriculum is purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The school is actively engaged in revising the curriculum to meet the requirements of the Common Core State Standards and NHS's newly established and adopted 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Many teachers of the core courses have begun and/or completed the process of revising the curriculum while others have yet to begin. The 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and learning expectations are aligned with the content that most effectively can and will measure student performance in these expectations and have been established as a required aspect of curricular importance. Within the curriculum template, the 21<sup>st</sup> century skill to be emphasized is identified and embedded in the written curriculum. The curriculum contains assessments that provide students opportunity to practice and to be assessed for achievement through the use of the school-wide rubric. The scores from the assessments used to measure these expectations are recorded in PowerSchool at least once per quarter to document the students' success. PowerSchool provides the students, parents and the school leadership and professional staff the ability to monitor, analyze and assess the overall performance of students in meeting the school's expectations. Because the expectations are dispersed throughout the content areas by alignment with the context of the course as opposed to expectations for the Norwalk student it is uncertain that all students would have the opportunity to meet all the expectations equitably. Many factors are at play in the creation and of a student's schedule throughout the four years at Norwalk High School. Adequate staffing, the number of students opting for specific courses, and the bell schedule itself, determine the classes that will make up a student's schedule from year to year thus determining the degree to which each of the expectations can be measured for each student. While there are significant opportunities for students to excel through such opportunities as Project Lead the Way, Advanced Placement courses and others, it is not apparent at this time that all students have equal opportunity to demonstrate mastery and achievement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills as a result of the variables that can impact a student's course schedule. A stronger tract in one direction or another can affect the student's capacity to practice certain skills over others thus there is no guarantee that all of the learning expectations will be equally assessed. Some students may have no formally designed opportunity to practice and achieve every expectation. When curriculum is purposefully designed to reflect the core values and beliefs of Norwalk High School, all students will have the opportunity to practice and achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, curriculum documents, teacher interviews, department leaders)

Newly revised curriculum is written in a common format that includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, skills, state standards, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The written curriculum that has undergone recent revision demonstrates a purposeful design to meet the school's core values and learning expectations. Norwalk High School has adopted a common curricular design template that is currently being used for all revisions of existing curriculum. The document, rigorous curriculum design unit planning organizer, makes specific reference to building a curriculum that includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills. The guide contains common state and national standards where applicable and a limited selection of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. The four skills listed in the document are not aligned to the seven adopted school-wide competencies. The document does not clearly define instructional strategies to be used throughout the course. Assessments utilizing an individual school-wide rubric, correlated by subject area, are present in the completed curricular revisions. The subject areas that have revised curriculum through the use of the template have created working documents that are clearly designed for students to maintain preparedness for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The curriculum guides have been used in the math, English, ELL, social studies, world language, NECA and physical education departments in the recent revision of courses. In some cases, courses utilize multiple school-wide expectation rubrics or customized versions of these rubrics. Other departments have older curricular documents dating back to 2003 and beyond. The older curriculum documents are varied in their structure and use of units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, skills, assessments, and common state and national standards where applicable. These documents do not contain reference to school-wide learning expectations or rubrics. Some elective courses and courses in the music department do not have written curriculum available for consideration. Norwalk High School formally addresses instructional strategies to be used in the curriculum through the use of common teacher planning time in Instructional Data Teams (IDTs.) The IDTs vary in function of meetings throughout each of the departments. Updating the district curriculum design template to align with all of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and utilizing well-defined instructional strategies will produce a guaranteed and viable curriculum for all students in all content areas. (self-study, curriculum documents, teacher interviews, department leaders, school leadership)

The dynamic approach by the professional staff at Norwalk High School to engage in the review and revision of the curriculum to align with the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century skills promotes a deliberate emphasis on depth of understanding and application of knowledge. Through the development of curriculum utilizing the adopted template, courses are constructed to ensure emphasis on depth of understanding through inquiry, problem solving and higher order thinking skills. Inquiry and problem

solving were prevalent in student work from the lab sciences and mathematics courses. The art department provides students with opportunities to apply higher order thinking skills when working with projects and portfolios in the classroom. Staff members have taken it upon themselves to generate cross-curricular opportunities for student learning. World language and art have worked together when researching French Impressionism artwork. Social studies students have been asked to recreate ancient culinary recipes using modern day ingredients and techniques. AP English students serve as peer editors for U.S. History letters to Congressman Hines. Opportunities for learning exist outside of school through the Project Explore program, field trips to countries abroad, and senior year internships. Business students travel to New York City to purchase goods wholesale and bring them back for resale in an attempt to earn profit. Student advisory curriculum includes lessons highlighting Bear Country News (BCN) broadcast and its relationship to informed and ethical use of technology. Students enrolled in social studies courses are exposed to topics emphasizing informed and ethical use of technology. Parents have reported seeing packets of homework pertaining to ethical online postings and blogs. Through increased cross-disciplinary connections and real-world applications in all courses, Norwalk High School students will deepen their understanding of all content areas through inquiry and authentic application of knowledge. (self-study, teacher interviews, department leaders, classroom observations, parents, curriculum documents)

There is clear alignment between the written curriculum and taught curriculum in content areas having undergone recent curricular revision. Courses with curriculum revised using the curriculum template have consistently shown alignment with the written and taught curriculum. Teachers collectively use IDT time to align themselves with other members teaching the same course and to make needed connections to the written curriculum. Department heads collect lesson plans and have biweekly opportunities for informal class walkthroughs and visitations of department members. Universally, department heads report this time is invaluable for maintaining balance and pacing of the taught curriculum. IDTs that utilize their time for aligning the taught curriculum regularly update building administration about their progress. The written curriculum was witnessed in multiple classrooms through postings of essential questions, concepts, lesson content, and required skills needed by students. These were witnessed in print and in electronic format. Courses with older curricular frameworks also had a degree of alignment between the written and taught curriculum. This alignment was evident through the observation of concepts, content and student skills. The 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and school-wide rubrics are being used in each of the courses at specified times during the school year. The connections between the daily coursework and the school-wide learning expectations were not

deliberately referenced in classrooms for students to see. Texts listed in written curriculum documents were utilized by teachers and students across the disciplines. It is difficult to gauge connections between the written and taught curriculum in those subject areas and elective courses that do not have a written or submitted curriculum for review. When teachers, department heads, and administrators work collaboratively to align curriculum to best practices, the written curriculum is reflected through daily classroom instruction. (teacher interviews, student shadowing, classroom observations, students, department leaders, school leadership, curriculum documents, self-study)

Effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation is limited between and among all academic areas of the school and extensively lacking with sending schools in the district. The majority of teachers report that there has been no strict adherence to the curriculum review cycle and that some curriculum documents have been left untouched for more than ten years. Curriculum revision has been accomplished by hiring consultants in the areas of mathematics and English. This year, the district appointed a Science Coordinator. The math, English, and social studies departments have spent considerable time aligning curriculum to the Connecticut State Standards. This has established curricular coordination amongst the courses in those subject areas. The science curriculum is aligned with existing state standards. Evaluation and revision of science curriculum has been delayed in anticipation of the Next Generation Science Standards. The world language department has also recently developed curriculum to establish continuity throughout the student's entire world language experience in Norwalk public schools. It is in this department along with mathematics that the curriculum designed is offered at the sending school level as well as the high school level. The strongest vertical articulation exists between the high schools and sending schools within these subject areas. Recent changes in course prerequisites by administration have increased student enrollment in honors level and AP level courses. Teachers report an increase in 9<sup>th</sup> grade honors student enrollment. NHS offers leveled courses consisting of Advanced Placement, Honors, Level 8 (college prep), Level 5 (some college prep) and unlevelled courses, those heterogeneously taught such as U.S. History. Co-taught classes are offered in some of the Level 5 subject areas. Teachers of 9<sup>th</sup> grade courses report, no time is allotted for teachers to meet with other staff from sending schools in preparation of incoming classes of students. IDTs have been established to provide all NHS staff with a common collaborative planning time within each individual content area. In limited cases curriculum binders of common assessments and instructional strategies have lead to articulation of curriculum. Cross-curricular collaboration activities are limited in frequency. The Norwalk public schools website hosts K-12 curriculum guidelines for all subject areas. The guides do not provide effective articulation of subject areas

throughout the student's entire career at Norwalk High School. When Norwalk High School teachers and administrators are able to meet consistently with representatives from the sending schools and collaborate with their high school colleagues on the curriculum, NHS students will benefit from a vertically articulated scope and sequence in the curriculum in all subject areas. (teachers, department leaders, school leadership, curriculum documents, self-study, Norwalk public schools' website.

In a limited capacity, staffing, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities and the resources of the library media center support the curriculum, which includes the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. Class sizes have been formally limited to a max of twenty-six students per class, twenty-four in lab sciences. The reported and observable average is about twenty-two students per class. The classroom teacher staffing is reported to be sufficient for the school to implement the current curriculum. The current schedule at NHS consists of 8 blocks daily and the district requires that only 6 blocks of a student's schedule be filled leaving many students to sit in unstructured study halls where they are not engaged in instructional time. Instructional materials are primarily supplied in adequate quantities to support maintaining the existing curriculum. Budgetary documents show the per pupil expenditure remained constant over the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. In the Endicott survey, 71.5 percent of students report that they are given adequate instructional materials in class. Individual students interviewed by committee members confirm these findings. Much like the curriculum documents, the textbook ages vary greatly amongst the departments. Money has been allocated for the purchase of a new anthology to be used in English courses. Other departments report books in excess of ten years old. With each revision of curriculum through the use of the template, the school requires increased use of technology in the classroom by both the teachers and students. Mobile computer labs have been purchased, a whole-school WiFi system has been installed to support virtual instruction and learning, SMARTBoards or comparable projectors are installed in the majority of classrooms. The WiFi is still in the process of providing a reliable signal throughout the entire building. Students and staff report continued connectivity issues within the building. Staff members have been forced to alter instruction and modify curriculum when an Internet failure disrupts student learning. In business technology course updates to existing technology software has caused some issues with compatibility and processing speed. The LMC is equipped with one mobile computer cart, four desktops for student use, and one computer lab with twenty-six computers and a SMARTBoard. It is now staffed with one library media specialist and one library assistant. Students and teachers refer to the computers in the LMC Lab as "the slowest computers in the school". This has negatively impacted curriculum in that students do not have reasonable access to the internet and

research and the staff do not find the library media center a viable resource for them to support learning and the curriculum in this venue. The athletic department reports a lack of gymnasium and field space available to appropriately implement curriculum. A Nellie Mae grant was awarded to NHS which was used to develop common formative assessment and allowed the staff of NHS to explore models across the state in order to develop an effective advisory that would meet the needs of the NHS students. Link Crew was created to support the freshmen entering NHS. Staff who researched and developed the program are not compensated for their time but are required to fulfill their creation through a duty. Co-curricular programs are provided limited financial support and must rely heavily on faculty and parent sponsored fundraising to meet financial needs. Grants are applied for yearly and some programs can only be run until the grant money subsides. When staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities and resources of the library media center are fully supported the academic and co-curricular opportunities will allow students to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, Norwalk public schools website, student interviews, Endicott survey, teachers, classroom observations)

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. Curriculum coordination is primarily handled at the K-12 level by curriculum coordinators and the deputy superintendent. The school system has math and English coordinators and a newly appointed science coordinator. The newest curriculum revisions have come at the behest of these coordinators and hired outside consultants. The professional staff is utilized when developing new curriculum. Funding has been provided during the 2013-2014 school year for the creation of a curriculum writing and revision team consisting of an administrator, department chair, and select teachers from each high school. The teams utilized the curriculum template and the original text it was designed from, *Ainsworth's Rigorous Curriculum Design*. Half days were provided to these steering committees consisting of staff from both high schools to establish the curriculum documents for math, English, and social studies. The world language revisions included staff from the middle schools as well. Curriculum is also revised over the summer in some limited cases. The staff coordination and articulation of existing curriculum documents is limited to time in IDTs and department meetings. Currently, there are no regular meetings that provide staff from the middle schools and high schools to meet with teachers from schools other than their own. The school system has a posted curriculum review cycle. This cycle is in various stages of implementation. Teachers in non-core departments report that the cycle is not in use. The curriculum's impact on student achievement of the school-wide

expectations is being collected and assessed but has yet to have any impact on curriculum revision. It is not evident that a plan is in place that would allow for the collected data to drive curriculum decision-making. As Norwalk High School teachers establish and utilize time and resources to meet collaboratively with their high school colleagues and with teachers from sending schools to facilitate the consistent review and implementation of curriculum, classroom instruction will have an impact on student learning that supports success for all students. (self-study, teachers, curriculum documents, department leaders, Norwalk public schools website)

**Commendations:**

1. The concerted efforts to revise existing curriculum documents to reflect 21<sup>st</sup> century learning
2. The adoption of a curriculum template that emphasizes rigor and ensures consistency of expectations across the school
3. The development of curriculum binders to align taught curriculum among teachers of common courses
4. The cross-curricular initiatives between some of the subject areas
5. The use of expert consultants in the curriculum revision process

**Recommendations:**

1. Complete the revision to all curriculum and ensure all courses have a written curriculum
2. Document an ongoing revision curriculum revision cycle that includes the development, implementation and the evaluation of the curriculum in all content areas
3. Ensure that revision of curriculum reflects 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and is inclusive of the elective course offerings
4. Provide regular opportunities for all departments to meet with sending schools in order to foster vertical articulation
5. Ensure staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library media center are sufficient to fully implement the curriculum
6. Create consistency in the use of IDTs by providing administrative oversight and feedback
7. Expand cross-curricular initiatives to incorporate all subject areas

**3****Instruction**

*The quality of instruction is the single most important factor in students' achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
2. Teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

## **Conclusions**

Across the school, teachers' instructional practices are continuously examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Professional staff reflects upon the impact of their practice on student achievement in Instructional Data Teams (IDTs) based on data collected through school-wide rubrics. They collaboratively devise ways to adjust their practice according to the data. Professional staff must input student data from school-wide rubrics into PowerSchool quarterly and are held accountable for doing so by housemasters through the teacher evaluation process. In doing this, the data on students' performance in terms of the core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations is amalgamated and becomes a tool to examine and inform future curriculum and practice. Housemasters and department chairs establish clearly communicated criteria tied to the school values and beliefs that are used in informal classroom observation called "drop ins." Teachers are given timely feedback from the "drop ins" through informal conversations and emails so they are able to immediately start incorporating that feedback into their practice. Finally, instructional practices are examined formally in the annual teacher evaluation. Accountability for embedding, targeting and assessing the students' achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and expectations is strengthened through the supervision and evaluation tool that determines a teacher's effectiveness of meeting the school's core values and beliefs. Through the consistent and continual examination of student performance and teacher expectations for the school's core values, beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations for learning, Norwalk High School will ensure student learning outcomes are consistently improved across all disciplines and accessed by all students. (teacher interviews, school leadership committee, self-study)

Most teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Teachers personalize instruction as evidenced in student work samples and in classroom observations. In AP English class, students make rich text-to-self connections during classroom discussion that they also support with specific textual evidence. A music student chooses to do her science fair project on the different uses of reeds in instruments, demonstrating an organic cross-disciplinary infusion in learning. Across the school students are engaged as active and self-directed learners. In many classrooms students are leading discussions, questioning and assisting each other, and planning programs and projects. Students are encouraged to explore and bring opportunities to learning through internships and the development of clubs and activities that enhance their growth. In the Norwalk Early College Academy (NECA), students are given the opportunity to actively accelerate

learning by taking college courses and engaging in self-paced online courses. However, due to NHS's current bell schedule, the consistency of direct instruction by professors from the nearby college does challenge the expectations and rigor of the college level courses. At the same time, NHS's use of school-wide rubrics encourages higher-order thinking and the student work is evidence that there is an emphasis on inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking in many classes. The Endicott Survey revealed that 74.4 percent of parents perceive that their son or daughter's teachers emphasize inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking. Students are often given opportunities to apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks. The music, art, business, culinary arts and broadcast journalism classes are all driven by the task of producing authentic products that genuinely enrich the school and community. Teachers often engage students in self-assessment and reflection. According to the Endicott Survey, 58.8percent of students perceive that their teachers provide opportunities for self-assessment and reflection. The school-wide rubrics by design include a self-assessment column where students reflect on their own performance based on the rubrics before receiving teacher feedback. Teachers frequently integrate technology into instruction, including the use of Google Classroom, SmartBoards, and Chromebooks. On the Endicott survey, 58.2 percent of students report that their teachers incorporate technology into their learning experience. Because the students are afforded the opportunity for personalized instruction, cross-disciplinary learning and are often engaged as self-directed learners, the students of Norwalk High School are supported in the achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (classroom observations, student shadowing, student work, Endicott survey, teacher interviews, parents)

Across the school, the vast majority of teachers adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student. Professional staff, formally and informally, use formative assessments to adjust their instructional practice. They meet in IDTs to review common formative assessments (CFAs) and devise ways to adjust instruction based on the results of the CFAs. Many staff use formative assessments on a more informal basis in the classroom to adjust instruction in live time. The use of clickers to check for understanding and for close observation of students as they work independently allows for ongoing adjustments to instruction. In some areas, professional staff strategically differentiates instruction for individual learners, although, evidence does not suggest that this is consistent across the school. In the English department, students work in book groups to complete the same assignment but with texts purposefully chosen by the teacher to be appropriate to their level. Parents recognize that teachers will purposefully adjust materials and assignments to meet the students' need. However, in many classroom observations it was clear that the majority of assignments are uniform with limited differentiation. Many professional staff across the school purposefully organize group-learning activities to meet the needs of

each student. According to the Endicott survey, 81.4 percent of students report that teachers use group activities in their classes. In the math department, teachers use heterogeneous grouping to increase student learning by allowing students who have demonstrated mastery of a concept or skill to work alongside students who are working toward mastery. Teachers often provide additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom, as evidenced by the Endicott survey on which 58.9 percent of students reported that their teachers use varied strategies within the classroom to support their learning. Through consistent monitoring of students as they work independently teachers are able to check for understanding and provide remediation through alternative strategies within the classroom. When Norwalk High School professional staff is able to more consistently establish practices of differentiated instruction informed through ongoing formative assessment, the needs of all students at NHS will be strategically addressed making it possible for all students to meet the expectations for the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. (classroom observation, Endicott survey, teacher interviews, self-study, student shadowing)

The vast majority of teachers individually and collaboratively work to improve their instructional practices. In IDTs, professional staff uses data from a variety of formative and summative assessments to make changes in curriculum and instruction. In the science department, CFAs are analyzed to help identify common areas of concern for students, and teachers develop lessons to remediate those concerns. Several teachers use students' self-reflections as a way of initiating a dialogue with students to examine the depth and quality of their work. At the same time, it is believed that there is a need to provide more frequent, substantial, and direct feedback to students to improve achievement. Teachers regularly examine examples of student work in IDTs and department meetings as a means of improving instructional practices. Teachers sporadically gather feedback from students, other teachers, supervisors and, infrequently, parents. An English teacher reported using feedback gathered from students regarding an assignment as a way of improving future practice. Teachers occasionally engage in peer observations and have collegial conversations reflecting on those observations. Teachers also receive feedback from housemasters and department heads after informal "drop ins." While these informal means of collecting feedback are being utilized, in the self-study the instruction committee expressed the need to develop formal strategies for securing feedback from a variety of sources, including parents, students and fellow teachers. Teachers regularly use scholarly journals, blogs, and publications from professional organizations as a means of examining current research and engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice. Many teachers also attend conferences held by the professional organizations they belong to, write articles for publications, and present at conferences. However, there is a need for

more financial support for teachers to attend conferences and workshops. The use of feedback from a variety of sources, examination of student work and current research is embedded in the reflection and collaboration by the professional staff at Norwalk High School, and when there is a more concentrated and focused approach to use this information consistently affect practice across the building, NHS will realize the true impact these practices will have on students accomplishing the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (Teacher interviews, department leaders, housemasters, self-study)

Most teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. According to the Endicott Survey 32.1 percent of teachers have obtained a master's degree, 39.9 percent of teachers have obtained a master's plus, 2.3 percent of teachers have obtained a doctoral degree, and some are continuing to work toward an advanced degree. The self-study, stated that "many teachers report engaging in ongoing professional development connected to their content areas, such as workshops in STEM, writing, culture, and humanities. Teachers from different content areas have participated in a workshop in Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP). Some teachers in the English department are part of the National Council of Teachers of English. Many teachers continue to be involved in a variety of activities to further their content-specific instructional practices, such as those that relate to classroom technology or expectations within the newly adopted Common Core State Standards. Some teachers in the world languages department attended the Yearly Conference for World Language to learn new instructional strategies and how to implement them effectively. These teachers are also members of American Council of Teachers of Foreign Language (ACTFL) which assists in support (sic) teachers in that content area." IDTs have proven to be a critical component of teachers sharing their expertise in content-specific instructional practices. The use of technology to enhance teacher practices in the classroom in delivering the curriculum and providing feedback to students, parents and the school community is lacking. Until recently, old technology made it impossible for the engineering students to design and implement the programming that was part of the course of study. Google accounts have been created for all staff and students and some teachers have embraced Google Classroom for their teaching and instruction but professional development was not provided so that all teachers no matter their proficiency at using technology has an equal chance in engaging the technology in their classroom. PowerSchool is a most effective tool for Norwalk to communicate student achievement and effectively secure the recording of all forms of data relative to the success of students, teachers have little knowledge of how to effectively use the program to inform their instruction and practice. As a result of the commitment of many teachers at Norwalk High School to remain focused as adult learners and reflective practitioners, they are able to

model the positive outcomes of life long learning for their students and to bring their expertise into the classroom to support teaching and learning and when the tools meant to support their commitment complement their efforts instructional practices will be more effective. (Endicott survey, self-study, individual teacher interviews, teachers)

### **Commendations:**

1. The ongoing use of IDTs to impact the ability of teachers to adjust their instructional practices in order to reach all students
2. The creation and use of school-wide rubrics aligned with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
3. The focus on engaging students as active and self-directed learners across the school both during learning activities and through self-reflection using the school-wide rubrics
4. The consistent close monitoring of students during instructional time to allow teachers to personalize instruction for students
5. The purposeful organization of group learning activities to ensure the needs of each student are met
6. The wide range of opportunities for students to contribute meaningfully to the school and larger community through classes designed around authentic tasks and products
7. The consistent effort of teachers to incorporate technology into instruction despite existing challenges

### **Recommendations:**

1. Continue to support Instructional Data Teams (IDTs) even through changes to the master schedule
2. Ensure that all teachers consistently emphasize higher order thinking in their instruction and assignments
3. Design lessons and assignments that consciously utilize differentiation strategies in order to meet the needs of all students
4. Encourage teachers of core classes to develop activities that enable students to apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks
5. Develop formal strategies for securing feedback from parents, students, and fellow teachers to improve instructional practice
6. Provide more frequent, substantial, and direct feedback to students to improve achievement

7. Ensure that the technology provided by the district can effectively support the teacher in all aspects of their instruction



### Assessment of and for Student Learning

*Assessment informs students and stakeholders of progress and growth toward meeting the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
2. The school's professional staff communicates:
  - individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to students and their families
  - the school's progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

## Conclusions

Norwalk High School teachers and administrators sometimes employ a formal assessment process through the use of school-wide rubrics and in some areas use these rubrics to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The Norwalk High School professional staff began developing school wide rubrics in the 2012-2013 school year. The subcommittees determined eleven expectations requiring school-wide rubrics. These eleven rubrics were piloted in the 2013-2014 school year. At that time, 59.7 percent (Endicott survey) of the faculty was currently using the school-wide analytic rubric. At the end of the 2013-2014 school year, with input from teachers, the decision to simplify the number of rubrics to seven was made to make the implementation of these school-wide rubrics more manageable. For instance, the world language department specifically targeted the oral communication and oral presentation rubrics and felt they were redundant. Therefore, the two rubrics were morphed into one that focused on oral communication. Presently, each discipline is responsible for using one of the seven school-wide rubrics. The implementation in this manner insures that all seven rubrics are used at least once per quarter in the assigned discipline. There is limited evidence, as referenced in the English and history department, of using both the effective reading rubric and the effective writing rubric but that is more the exception than the norm. World language teachers frequently spoke of using not only the oral Communication rubric but also the effective writing rubric. However, many departments only use the one rubric they were required to use once per quarter (in some class's semesters) and a few teachers reported that they did not use them at all. Through conversations with students, it was noted that students are familiar with the school-wide rubrics but there is some confusion as to their purpose. Through teacher and administration interviews, it was made clear that the 2014-2015 school year is the first year of implementation of the seven rubrics and that coupled with the change to PowerSchool has led to some challenging difficulties. In an effort to increase the use of formative assessments using school-wide rubrics, the administration has tied the use of these rubrics to the student learning objective (SLO) goals. Administration reports that the use of school-wide rubrics, at least once per quarter, will be tied to teacher evaluations. It is the hope of most teachers and administrators that the use of these school-wide rubrics with formative assessment strategies will result in greater use and more effective assessment of students' 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. Many teachers feel that for this to happen the rubrics will need to be reassessed using more than one department's input on the indicators, therefore, increasing the frequency and authenticity by which they can be used. Norwalk High School's continued focus on the implementation and increased

frequency of a formal process to employ the use of school-wide rubrics will ensure that every student, no matter the course, level, or teacher, will be regularly assessed using these rubrics across all disciplines, and the school will then assess itself, as well as assess individual progress in achievement of its expectations. (teacher interviews, classroom observations, student work, Endicott survey, self-study, administrators).

Communication of students' progress in achieving school-wide 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to students, parents, and the community, is frequent and has been implemented by the professional staff through a formal process. Norwalk High School professional staff communicates students' progress in achieving 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations with students and parents directly through interim and semester reports that are sent to students' homes via mail. The recent purchase of PowerSchool, a web based tool for storing and reporting student data, has provided professional staff with a means to actively maintain grade reporting and student averages. On February 5, 2015, administration sent a letter to the homes of all students explaining the use of the rubrics and directed parents as to how they may find more information pertaining to the rubrics and individual student reporting. It was clear in the letter to the parents that scores achieved on the school-wide rubric do not directly impact a student's academic standing in any content area but do inform the student, parent and the school about the individual student's and the whole-school's success at meeting the standards of expectations. The PowerSchool portal that is easily accessed by students and parents any time of day from any Internet source is instrumental in simplifying the reporting of student performance in that the data is live and updated with each new score/grade that is submitted by the teacher. A customized report in PowerSchool permits the professional staff to run reports to gather information about progress in meeting the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century skills by student, class and by the school as a whole. The whole-school information is reported to the community through the school's website. As a result of Norwalk High School's frequent communication, parents and students are able to have an understanding of how they or their students are progressing toward the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (Parent letter, building administrators, school website, teacher)

Across the school, the professional staff collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement. The professional staff at Norwalk High School purposefully and consistently uses assessment data that has been collected, disaggregated, and analyzed to assess individual student progress for the purpose of both identifying and responding to inequities in student achievement. The regular collaboration built into the daily school schedule of Instructional Data Teams (IDT's) on seven out of an eight-day rotation allows the professional staff to work within their

department to assess the skills of their students in achieving 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Staff examines data on student performance as it relates to individual students and subgroups, during Instructional Data Team (IDT) meetings and department meetings, during which performances and possible interventions are recommended. The process originated with basic steps that enabled teachers to use data to make informed decisions and take strategic action: setting the stage, examining the data, understanding the findings, developing an action plan, as well as monitoring progress and measuring success. Since the inception of the CT SEED evaluation model, data teams have focused on analyzing student progress toward established learning objectives based on state, district, and department assessments. The administration, faculty, and support staff have the ability to access, compile, and review class scores and student records from previous years from Connecticut Mastery Tests (CMT) and Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) through an online program. During IDT meetings, staff analyzes data and scores from both these tests and specific courses, to determine if a student's current achievement is improving or declining. The team makes recommendations for intervention or remediation. These actions include one-on-one conferencing, re-teaching skills, parent or guidance counselor contact, tutoring, and enrichment opportunities. In teacher interviews it was evident that teacher participation in IDTs led to professional discourse about best practices and commonalities and inequities in student achievement in common formative assessments. If inequities are found teachers create an action plan to help struggling students. For example, in history, English, science and math teachers spoke to tutorial time during which students who needed additional assistance (teaching) meet with these students during IDT time. The world language department spoke of data gathered from IDT meetings that led to pairing an upper level world language learner with a Level 1 learner. Administrators spoke to the data gathered during IDTs leading to student intervention and the pairing of a struggling student and a subject area teacher during a tutorial or study hall for extra help. The standardized data used by the majority of the staff is from CMT, CAPT, AP exams, PSAT, CT Fitness, Common Formative Assessments (CFA), and graduation statistics. Data from previous school and state assessments are used to determine the needs of incoming students. Students who are identified as having special needs are assigned a case manager, and Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings are conducted to individualize learning goals and objectives. Case managers and support staff collaborate with classroom teachers to track student progress. Incoming students identified as English language learners are assessed by staff and data is reviewed in order to place them into the corresponding program based on their level of performance. Instructional Data Teams at Norwalk High School are an essential and effective component that allows professional staff to assess, analyze, discuss best practices and work

together to intervene and to assist in responding to inequities in student achievement. (self-study, teacher interviews, building administrators)

Most teachers communicate the school's applicable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and unit-specific goals to be assessed prior to each unit of study. The Endicott survey, reveals that 60 percent of students and 58.9 percent of parents agree that teachers state their learning expectations before each unit. Additionally, 52.9 percent of teachers agree that they state expectations for both 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and unit-specific learning goals prior to each unit of study. These expectations are incorporated into individual class syllabi, unit projects, rubrics, and communicated verbally. In addition, when students were asked they almost always said that they were given rubrics for major assignments prior to the assessment being given in class so that expectations were clear. It was evident in teacher interviews that the expectation to use a school-wide rubric is a requirement at least once per quarter. Of the four core subject areas (English, mathematics, social studies, and science), 47 percent of teachers have a website in which their class expectations, rubrics and unit information are clearly stated, accessible and aligned with the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. In the 2014-2015 school year, the use of Google classroom has enabled these materials to be more accessible to the school community. Norwalk High School teachers effectively communicating the school's applicable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and unit-specific goals to be assessed prior to each unit of study enables students to have a clear understanding of what is expected. (self-study, Endicott survey, teacher interviews, students, student work, classroom observations).

Many teachers regularly provide their students with course-specific rubrics that are used to assess students learning prior to summative assessments. The Endicott survey revealed that 65.9 percent of the student respondents agree their teachers use rubrics to assess their work and 68 percent of students understand the rubrics their teachers use. Also, based on the Endicott survey, 55.5 percent of parents are familiar with, and understand the school-wide analytic rubrics used to assess their students' learning. The Endicott survey showed that nearly 50 percent of teachers provide corresponding rubrics to summative assessments ahead of time, and an additional 18 percent of teachers provide the rubric prior to giving an assessment. For instance, in Chemistry there was a consistent use of lab rubrics across multiple teachers. In student work in social studies and English there were rubrics that explained the expectations of the assessments and a place where students could self-assess. In speaking with students, most agreed that rubrics are given with summative assessments and that the expectations of these rubrics are communicated and understood. In addition to providing students with rubrics, teachers also take the time to review and explain the expectations illustrated in the rubric to clarify any questions that students

may have prior to summative assessments. Since the Endicott survey, Norwalk High School's school-wide rubrics have increased in use by teachers in all content areas and has been reported using the online student reporting system. All school-wide rubrics are published and are provided to students in the beginning of the year. As a result of Norwalk High School teachers providing rubrics prior to summative assessments students have a greater understanding of their expectations allowing for clarification and increasing the likelihood of their success on the assessment. (Endicott survey, student work, students, teacher interviews, classroom observations)

Teachers apply a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments in each unit of study. Through classroom observation it was evident that formative assessments are regularly used to gain feedback on performance, as well as to gain insight into a student's strengths and areas in need of improvement. For example, in a web design class the teacher generated an online poll by text and projected the data through the SmartBoard to see how well students understood the different elements of film. In a Spanish 5 class, students worked collaboratively on a project in which they chose where they wanted to go on spring break and why. They needed to work together to use technology, research and present in Spanish to the class. In AP US History, students were expected to interview someone who lived through 9/11 and make the comparison to what it would have been like to live through Pearl Harbor. In AP American Government students were given practice AP questions to simulate the AP test. Students collaborated and discussed possible answers to multi-part questions. According to the Endicott Survey, 84.9 percent of teachers surveyed frequently use formative assessments throughout each unit of study although classroom observations and student and teacher interviews suggest this number could be much higher. These assessments most often take place at the beginning of a unit, or when introducing a new topic. In addition, many teachers continue to use formative assessments at milestones throughout each unit of study. The use of formative assessments at Norwalk High School is broad and diverse across each department to ensure students are on target to meet expectations. In the beginning of class, strategies such as "admission tickets" and "do now" problems are used frequently. Many teachers utilize varied questioning techniques, as well as brief written responses to questions on mini-whiteboards and partner sharing. At the end of lessons, teachers across disciplines use "exit slips" and "post its" or "parking lots." Also, formative assessments in science are found in lab report rough drafts, daily homework assignments, practice problems, and inquiry-based activities. According to the NHS Evidence Collection Survey, 98.8 percent of teachers use summative assessments in their classes. Summative assessments in general, are most commonly used by staff at the end of a unit of study, and as midterm and final exams. For example, the science

department has common summative assessments in the form of midterm and final exams in General Science, Biology, and Chemistry, as does the math department in Algebra I and Geometry in which 100 percent of the test is the same. The English department has a common portion of their summative assessments in each grade level, whereas social studies has common summative assessments in Civics, World History, and U.S. History. These summative assessments come in the form of essays, speeches, multimedia presentations, reading for information, and research among others. Many are aligned with the school-wide rubrics. As a result of the wide range of assessment strategies, including a range of formative assessments and summative assessment in each unit of study, students at Norwalk High School are able to receive feedback from teachers and display their knowledge in each subject area. (self-study, classroom observations, teacher interviews, NHS Evidence Collection Survey, Endicott survey).

Across the school, teachers collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments. Within its daily schedule, Norwalk High School provides formal time for common planning, as well as time to analyze assessment data and revise assessments in each department. During an eight-day rotation, all teachers have a designated Instructional Data Team (IDT) period that meets seven out of every eight-day rotation, during which time teachers discuss student learning and achievement. According to the NHS Evidence Collection Survey, “Revisions are made to formative, summative and common assessments based on student results...during IDT revisions are made most times.” Through teacher interviews this was consistently stated. This survey also shows the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments occur during department meetings. Developed by school leadership teams, goals and agendas reflect dedicated time to setting student goals, discussing, reviewing formative and summative assessment data, and making modifications based on student learning in curricular, and instructional practices. Through IDT, teachers are given time to meet formally to discuss and improve both formative and summative assessment strategies. These strategies are used to ensure student learning is regularly assessed. At the conclusion of each week, a record of what was accomplished is sent to the principal with administration occasionally providing feedback to the teachers. In department chair interviews it was made clear that feedback is given to the IDT teams from Housemasters. However, teachers do not always agree, stating in interviews that they do not know if some administrators even looked at their weekly reports. Through IDT time the world language, science, math, social studies, and English departments are able to increasingly reflect on and edit common assessments and create department rubrics within common courses based on student data and achievement. The world language

department uses common vocabulary quizzes, oral presentations, and other reading and writing exercises. The world language department also consistently uses the oral communication rubric for all oral presentations. The math department uses common rubrics, formative assessments, and summative assessments to inform future planning, instruction, and necessary interventions. The math department also ensures common assessments are being graded consistently through departmental calibration, so that meaningful analysis can lead to proper action and this was reiterated through teacher interviews. The art department uses common summative assessments for classes taught by multiple teachers. The English department has focused on thesis writing revisions and other common tasks to assist student use of important language and writing skills. The science department uses common formative assessments, school-wide rubrics, and CAPT or CMT data to focus on future instruction of important skills and concepts that students need more work with to be successful in future courses. Chemistry teachers use common lab report rubrics to assess students across all Chemistry classes. The school uses formative and summative assessments to ensure that daily, ongoing student learning is assessed. While all teachers use a balance of formative and summative assessments, it is becoming routine in all departments that common formative and summative assessments inform student progress and future instructional practices. It was evident from teacher interviews, science, math and core required courses in Social Studies use 100 percent common summative assessments. The opportunity exists for cross-curricular collaboration within the IDT period, but it has not been utilized to this point. Teachers of art and world language have embraced the practice of cross-curricular collaboration and produced exemplary projects for students to experience. As a result of effective collaboration and the thorough use of common assessments in like courses, Norwalk High School have developed a shared vision of what learning looks like and will benefit students of all levels. (teacher interviews, self-study, student work, building administration).

A vast majority of teachers across all disciplines provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work. According to a portion of the anecdotal responses in the NHS Evidence Collection Survey, teachers employ many strategies and tools to assist in providing immediate feedback including written notes or cues, one-on-one conferences, individual whiteboards, clickers, trackers, daily openers, exit slips, project revisions, rough drafts, modeling, peer revision, and school-wide rubrics. Some teachers provide “constant feedback on assignments that [students] can revise or seek help on. This varies from homework and class assignments to post quiz and test tutoring sessions.” Other teachers “require students to submit a rough draft for a project or essay which is graded and given feedback.” With this, “the student is able to revise and re-submit.” Another teacher wrote, “I

write them a note in their homework. While others are working I sit down individually with each of them and explain their mistakes...or during a study hall, before or after school.” Examples of how teachers utilize these approaches are evident in student work, classroom observation and teacher interviews from multiple disciplines. For example, in a Sociology class a rough draft of a socialization paper was turned in for teacher feedback on the thesis statement and evidence was then given back to the student to make changes and turn in for a final grade. This process allows for growth and achievement. In a Chemistry class, students participated in a game of Chemistry “Jeopardy” to prepare for a test. Answers were given and feedback was immediate. In AP Language classes and AP English classes the use of Google Docs enables students to share work with teachers and teachers provide feedback in the margins for students to address in real time. However, there were some pieces of student work on which there was a lack of written feedback evidence. According to the Endicott survey, 57 percent of students agree that their teachers assess their work in a reasonable amount of time, and 67 percent of students agree that their teachers offer suggestions to help improve their school work. This suggests that the feedback is meaningful and effective when provided in a timely manner. Additionally, 67 percent of parents agree that their children’s teachers provide timely and corrective feedback and assist in revising and improving assignments. As a result of most Norwalk High School teachers providing specific, timely and corrective feedback, most students are able to improve their work, refine their skills and focus on achieving 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (student work, teacher interviews, Endicott survey, self-study, self-study, NHS Collection Survey, classroom observations).

Teachers continuously use a variety of formative assessments to inform and adapt their instructional practices in order to improve student learning. The results of the Endicott Survey show that 75.6% percent of students, 71.3 percent of parents and 69 percent of faculty members believe formative assessments are used to guide instruction. The NHS Evidence Collection Survey indicates that 93 percent of faculty members regularly employ a wide variety of formative assessments and are modifying their lessons to address gaps in student learning, determining the speed at which to continue and rework standards into subsequent lessons. Formative assessments vary by department, but the general result is conscious evaluation of lesson design. One example of how teachers adapt their instruction is “grouping of students of varying levels in order to aid one another in instruction and follow through of assignments both written and practical.” Another example is that teachers “use formative assessments to gauge how pacing is going or to determine how in depth the teacher needs to go on certain subjects.” Formative assessments also provide teachers the necessary information to decide whether they need to reteach or move forward in the curriculum. Some specific examples of types of formative assessment used for this

include concept maps, quizzes, lab drafts and exit slips. IDTs are instrumental in the process of creating effective common formative assessments. Additionally, IDTs are the vehicle by which the professional staff can analyze assessments and their related data to have professional discourse on best practices. As a result of using a variety of common formative assessments and the IDT process, Norwalk High School teachers are able to adapt and improve their instructional practice. (Endicott survey, self-study, teacher interviews, NHS Collection Survey).

The vast majority of Norwalk High School teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a broad range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of improving instructional practices and some, for the purpose of revising curriculum. Teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of improving instructional practice and some for revision of the curriculum including the following: student work, common course and common grade-level assessments, common formative assessments across similar courses, individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, standardized assessments, and data from sending schools. There is a lack of evidence showing that Norwalk High School analyzed data from postsecondary institutions, nor data from alumni. Student performance results are one of the essential components to the process of assessing and improving instructional strategies and can be used to improve curriculum. Teachers report that most of the data used to improve instructional strategies are examined during IDT meetings. Teachers report that the data analyzed during these periods are most often from student work, common formative and summative assessments, and some authentic learning tasks. In some areas, these tasks assess the students' application of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations as evaluated by the school-wide rubrics specific to their discipline. The collaboration of teachers begins the discussion around instructional practices and is often used to determine why some students are successful and others are not. In administrative team meetings that include department heads and school administrators, progress toward school-wide learning expectations is discussed, specifically the impact of every teacher having to report on at least one rubric per quarter. In interviews with members of the English department it was evidenced that department meetings are another source of analysis of student work. In math, science, English, social studies, art and world language department meetings the discussion of student data drives some changes to the curriculum. For example, the Algebra I teachers review data from the common assessments based on the Common Core State Standards. The art department uses many different formative assessments to guide instruction, pacing, lesson and unit planning including pre-tests, process checks, small group critiques with accompanying vocabulary guides and rubric etiquette, whole-class

discussions, peer discussions, and teacher-student discussions. The English department reviews data from the Beginning of the Year (BOY) assessment, which is a district level test that is aligned to the curriculum. Science analyzes the CAPT data. In these meetings, departments and administrators discuss student learning objectives (SLOs) and skills to focus on for a specific timeframe. Adjustments to common assessments and pacing guides are also made from these discussions. In faculty meetings, student achievement data on national tests such as the PSAT, SAT, or AP exams are shared. This information is presented to all staff as to increase awareness of student performance and to generate ideas of how to improve but there is a lack of evidence of follow through. The Endicott survey shows that 75.6 percent of students agree that teachers use a variety of methods to assess their learning. 58 percent of certified staff feels 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. 71% of parents feel teachers use a variety of methods to assess his or her students' learning. This indicates that although this analysis is occurring it can be more effectively used to drive the review of instructional practices and curriculum revisions on a larger scale. Connecticut's System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED) requires teachers with the help of administrators to create two student learning objectives (SLOs) which are the teacher's goals for the school year. At least one of those SLO goals must directly relate to the implementation of school-wide rubrics and student achievement on meeting the assigned 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Assessment data is collected during each quarter toward these objectives; the mid-year review, all pre and post-observation conferences, and the summative review are all occasions in which the examination of evidence will directly impact instructional practice. There are also meetings with grade level or course representatives to examine the curriculum documents and student results on authentic learning experiences. The purpose of these meetings is to begin the process of how to revise curriculum. Norwalk High School receives data from report cards and student records of sending schools, as well as standardized data in the form of the CMT and CAPT scores. Norwalk High School also provides data to post-secondary institutions, but does not receive data in return. Teachers from Norwalk middle schools, administrators, counselors, and parents recommend and place incoming grade 9 students at Norwalk High School. Grade 10 teachers use CMT scores to direct their evaluations as well as direct how they will prepare students for the CAPT in the spring of the students' sophomore year and now the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) in grade 11. The guidance department sends transcripts and immunization records for students attending two-year schools. For four-year colleges and universities, the documents include transcripts, school profiles, letters of recommendation, and, if available, senior

year grades. The survey data that is collected on students at Norwalk High School is compiled by the school's guidance department. The surveys used most frequently are through an online program called Naviance. This program has interest and personality inventories as well as graduation surveys. The Naviance program is used to direct students to post-secondary institutions that are best suited for them as well as what career choice the student can pursue. The guidance department also collects and stores data on the acceptance letters seniors receive from post-secondary institutions. These post-secondary institutions do not send any data back to Norwalk High School to inform the school on how well the students are progressing. Currently, alumni surveys are only for alumni who return to Norwalk High School during their freshman year of college to speak about their post-secondary experiences with the current senior class. As a result of the vast majority of Norwalk High School teachers and administrators, both individually and collaboratively, examining a broad range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of improving instructional practices and some, for the purpose of revising curriculum, 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations can be achieved. (self-study, Endicott survey, teacher interviews, building administrators).

Grading and reporting practices at Norwalk High School are purposely reviewed to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. In the 2013-2014 school-year, the Norwalk High School had eleven specific school-wide rubrics that were piloted by all departments and student progress was reported through the online grading system. Based on the Endicott survey assessing that data, 68.9 percent of parents agreed that teachers' grading practices were aligned with the school's beliefs about learning. Despite the view that the teachers successfully aligned their practices with their grading, a School-Wide Rubric Departmental Reflection completed in the spring of 2014 prompted the professional staff to combine some of the eleven rubrics to form seven rubrics that could more effectively be implemented and used to measure students' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. In the 2014-2015 school year, each department was required to report on one assigned school-wide rubric each marking period, with some departments, like science, required to report on only one assigned rubric per semester. The English Department reports using the effective writing rubric, social studies is using the reading for and gathering information rubric, world languages and English language learners are using the oral communication rubric, mathematics is using critical thinking and problem solving, the science and business departments are using the multimedia rubric once per semester, music, art, and physical education are using collaboration and participation rubrics one quarter each, and the service with global awareness rubric is reported on through advisory. Teachers assess student progress using the entire rubric on a particular assignment, or they can assess specific components of the rubric to various

assignments over the course of the quarter and ultimately obtain a score out of twenty. This progress is reported in PowerSchool. Parents have the ability to see how their children are progressing in each class on a daily basis in the parent portal. In classroom visits, teachers modeled how they are able to set weights for their categories based on their policies. Each teacher is required to use the online grade book for each of his or her classes. For example, a physical education teacher uses department rubrics for each unit and skill taught, and has a participation grade for each class period which is aligned to the school-wide participation rubric, and unit exams. The math department uses common assessment rubrics, the school-wide rubric for problem solving, and summative assessments. Through student work, it was evident that world language teachers frequently used the oral communication rubric to assess spoken communication in their classes. All assessment grades are placed online in each quarter. As a result of regularly reviewing grading and reporting practices to ensure alignment with Norwalk High School's core values and beliefs about student learning, achieving Norwalk High School's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations has become more manageable and focused. (self-study, Endicott survey, student work, classroom observations, teacher interviews).

### **Commendations:**

1. The use of IDTs to effectively monitor progress and achievement toward 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations at Norwalk High School
2. The allotment of time for IDTs within the daily schedule
3. The discussion of best practices and effective strategies toward meeting 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
4. The communication of expectations to students through rubrics
5. The successful implementation of a wide range of both formative and summative assessments throughout units of study
6. The timely and effective feedback through the use of technology (PowerSchool) which allows students to revise and improve their work in real time
7. The formative and summative assessments that allow for teachers to gather data to modify instruction
8. The ongoing reflection that honed the focus of eleven rubrics to seven rubrics
9. The extensive use of data to drive instruction to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
10. The time allotted to analyze data

11. The employment of formative assessments in a regular and varied manner to inform instructional process

**Recommendations:**

1. Implement and increase the frequency of the use school-wide rubrics across all disciplines
2. Communicate academic expectations to students in the form of rubrics prior to assessments consistently across all subjects
3. Develop and implement a process to ensure teachers provide specific, timely and effective feedback by professional staff to all students on written work
4. Provide quality administrative feedback resulting from the minutes submitted from the IDT process and encourage outcomes that will drive best practices
5. Routinely modify instructional practices based on examination of individual student and school progress in achieving the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations routinely
6. Review rubrics with all stakeholders for better alignment with 21st century learning expectations across all disciplines
7. Develop and implement a process to ensure grading and reporting practices align with the school's core values and beliefs about learning

# **SUPPORT STANDARDS**

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**SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP**

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**SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**

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**COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**

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**5**

**School Culture and Leadership**

*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, inclusive, and fosters heterogeneity where every student over the course of the high school experience is enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core course (English/language arts, social studies, math, science, or world languages).
3. There is a formal, ongoing program 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
12. The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school.

## **Conclusions**

The Norwalk High School community regularly 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. Through the daily routine of the school, teacher interactions with students, course offerings and expanded learning opportunities as well as the artistic displays of school pride and core values and beliefs throughout the halls of the building, it is evident that a positive respectful and supportive climate steers the accomplishments of students and teachers alike. Students have contact with guidance counselors, advisory board, Link Crew, and peer mentors. The school community builds a positive learning environment through celebrating their success in all school assemblies, school announcements, The Bear Country News, teacher and student relationships, as well as the advisory program. The culture of Norwalk High School demonstrates an acceptance for all ethnic groups and promotes a diverse and welcoming atmosphere. Students of different origins engage in conversation in the hallways, the classrooms and during lunch as one community. The school is dedicated to building a supportive culture through the creation of the Project Explorer program, Best Buddies, BROWN (Bears reaching out within Norwalk), peer tutors, Link Crew, The Den and much more. Norwalk High School fosters each student's responsibility for learning by utilizing student school-wide rubrics, 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, core values, vision, PowerSchool and by adding many new and exciting clubs and organizations. Students stated that they share much excitement about the new clubs and sports that are offered throughout the school year. Students utilize social media to Tweet specific colors to wear to sporting events to support their school teams. The overall culture, ownership, pride, and expectations are accomplished through student success plans, student-initiated utilization of each department's individualized writing, math, history, and science resource centers for additional support, as well as Project Explore which allows students to self-initiate projects based on their individual interests and likes. Students who are in danger of not earning credits toward graduation have ability to earn credit through APEX online credit recovery program and to attend summer school. Students must also attend classes regularly to earn credits and follow the school-wide attendance policy. The school community ensures a safe culture through security guards, cameras, and a Student Resource Officer (SRO). The SRO is in the building every school day from 7:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. An additional police officer is located outside on school property from 11:00 a.m.- 2:30 p.m. Forty-eight cameras are located throughout the school which are supervised by security. There is only one stairwell that is unsupervised and lacks an alarm. (classroom observations, self-study, building administrators, teacher interviews and students)

Norwalk High School is inclusive, and fosters heterogeneity where many students over the course of the high school experience are enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core course. It was evident through classroom observations that the majority of students are placed in heterogeneous classes and are able to participate in active communication and participation in the curriculum. Most special education students are able to attend general education core classes with provided supports while others are in self-contained classes for English, math, history, and science. Inclusive classrooms are present the majority of the time. In addition to class observation, administrators shared that Civics, 9<sup>th</sup> grade Physical Science and World History are non-leveled courses while the remainder of the courses throughout all core disciplines continue to be leveled. All students are afforded the opportunity to take heterogeneously grouped courses in multiple elective subject areas in order to graduate, such as health, physical education, world languages, art, music, and business. Students with special needs and English language learners (ELL) have the opportunity to enroll in these heterogeneously grouped courses as well. Through classroom observation, it was evident that they use the co-taught model in all grade levels for English, history, science, and math. However, it was evident that not all general education teachers are open to the experience and opportunity to have the additional support within the classroom. Norwalk High School is inclusive, and fosters heterogeneity in a minimum of one core course that promotes an environment for all students to succeed and excel. (classroom observations, self-study, Building Administrators, teacher interviews and students)

At Norwalk High School there is a recognized, ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who generally knows the student and supports the student in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, which includes collaboration, digital literacy, critical thinking, and problem solving. In order to create a more personalized learning environment for the students at Norwalk High School, a team of teachers came together to research and design a program that could facilitate the opportunity for the professional staff to make a connection with a small group of students guiding them in reflection discovery about how to be successful and engaged in their school community. Students remain with the same advisory teachers for all four years. The program differentiates the ninth graders from the rest of the student population understanding that their needs are different. The freshman activities work on team building and collaboration as well as problem solving related to their academic, personal, social and emotional connection to school. Link Crew, a program designed to link all ninth graders with an upper classman, provides upper classmen with a means to develop their leadership skills while assisting freshmen in transitioning to a new learning environment by bringing their personal experiences and stories to the forefront of learning.

Depending on the weekly lesson, either the teacher/classroom advisor or the Link Crew member or both facilitate the lesson. Weekly lessons for advisors and their students in grades, ten, eleven and twelve are created to assist in the facilitation of mastering 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. New and rigorous lessons are provided to engage each student in collaboration, reflection, and critical analysis. In addition, in each advisory session the entire school watches The Bear Country News (BCN) which enhances the students' digital literacy as well as connects all students to the larger NHS community. As a result of Norwalk High School's investment in time and effort to build a more personalized approach to the development of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, the school is able to model the skills of collaboration, reflection, problem solving in an authentic and small group environment that fosters leadership and ownership. (classroom observations, self-study, building administrators, teacher interviews and students)

The professional staff at Norwalk High School use time built into the school day and the school calendar to improve student learning through professional discourse, reflection, inquiry and analysis. The principal has established an open door policy with the staff of Norwalk High School and welcomes teachers, staff, and students to meet whenever he is available. Some teachers spoke of frequent drop-ins to the principal's office to discuss various aspects of the school day from academic to social / emotional as well as extra curricular. Many teachers express a desire for greater analysis of teaching and learning by the building principal with a vision for growth and sustainability in practice. The housemasters are viewed as frequent visitors to the classroom with follow-up meetings and feedback that is consistent and helpful in guiding classroom practices and improvement in pedagogy. Outside resources for professional development are limited in availability to teachers and administration. Many initiatives that the school has incorporated in the way of technology whether it be Google classroom, the use of Chromebooks or a web-based program for storing student data (PowerSchool) has not been sufficiently supported through professional development and has not kept up with the trend toward enhancing technology in the building and promoting 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Teachers and administrators have the ability to log onto the PowerSchool website and receive a variety of different webinars on how to use PowerSchool, but time is not allotted for those webinars outside of the school day. Teachers have had to find time to view the webinars whenever their personal schedule permits. Central office staff recognizes that the deployment of technology and the professional development necessary to fully implement it all with integrity has not been well aligned. The district has employed outside consultants to provide ongoing training and educational strategies in curriculum development. The consultants have provided a critical lens in support of the curriculum maps that will be most beneficial to the school's progress in aligning with

their goals and expectations for student learning. Within the school day, teachers are given frequent opportunities to meet with their Instructional Data Teams (IDT). While the IDT time is a priority in the structuring of the school schedule and there is some significant benefits to the curriculum and instruction that results from this time, the perception by some professional staff is that the time is not standardized and consistent from department to department and thus does not offer the same outcome for all staff. Some teachers find the time spent collaborating with their colleagues valuable and supportive in acquiring best practices while others state that they find the dedicated time unproductive and lacking substance for them. The professional development that has been prescribed to implement the school-wide rubrics has not transitioned the teachers into a culture of consistency and purposeful use for informing instruction in the classroom. Beyond the use of the rubric to inform students of the expectations for learning and the instruction by the classroom teacher, the collection of the data that can be gleaned from the tools lacks a clear direction and understanding on the part of all teachers. Many of the researched best practices that have been set in motion at NHS have been through the personal commitment and dedication of the professional staff to bring the best in education to their tool kit so that they can enhance teaching and learning. Sixty-one percent of staff does not agree that the school's professional development programs enable teachers to acquire and use the skills necessary to improve instruction and assessment. The principal and the professional staff at Norwalk High School have established the structures to support reflection, professional discourse, inquiry and analysis, and when those structures are soundly supported with the professional development that meets the needs of the professional staff, the school will be better able to achieve their vision for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. (Endicott survey, teacher interviews, building administrators)

School leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improving student learning. Norwalk High School uses the System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED). This model emphasizes the following research-based principles: multiple standards-based measures of performance; growth over time; professional judgment and consistency; dialogue about student learning; aligned professional learning, coaching, and feedback to support growth; as well as feasibility of implementation. This process involves teachers setting goals for learning, planning, and creating student learning objectives, midyear check in with administrators and end-of-the-year summative review. Rubrics are a dedicated part of the school-wide education plan and assess student progress in their academics. The administrators who are responsible for supervision and evaluation of the professional staff are on track to meet the state mandate by incorporating the Connecticut model and by using the school-wide rubrics as an indicator of proficient and exemplary

teaching at Norwalk High School. As a result of the commitment by the school leaders to incorporate research-based evaluation and supervision processes, NHS has the capacity to identify relevant professional development and best practices that will result in continuous improvement in student learning and outcomes. (building administrators, teacher interviews, central office personnel)

The organization of time deliberately supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students. Norwalk High School's bell schedule is constructed to incorporate seven periods a day with an emphasis on enabling teachers to meet collaboratively in Instructional Data Teams. Also considered of significant importance are the options to build in school assembly time, advisory period, and homeroom. The school prepares in advance for the various factors that can prompt the need for a shortened day as well as delayed opening and early dismissal. The current schedule is under evaluation and consideration is being given to moving to a block schedule that would allow for more dedicated time on learning and an opportunity for students to take advantage of internships, community-based learning and real-world experiences. The current rotating schedule has also challenged the newly developed NECA program that brings professors/instructors from the local community college to provide college-level courses to the students at NHS as part of the students' regular high school schedule. The availability of the instructors does not always align with the rotation and on some days the instructional time is lost. Every other day, IDTs are scheduled to meet for one forty-six minute period. Opposite the IDT time every other day, teachers provide tutoring to students both to reduce the risk of failure or to provide enrichment for those students who seek out that additional instructional time. In order for administration to prioritize the use of this time and provide this forty-six minute block to every teacher everyday, a number of students have to be scheduled into study halls because of an inadequate number of course offerings thus diminishing time on learning. Some students have as many as two to three study halls built into their schedule. Many of the students with multiple study halls are upperclassmen who are on track to meet graduation requirements despite the study halls but lack the chance for enrichment courses that can enhance college and career readiness. Walk-throughs of the school building and observations of study halls showed students playing card games, sitting and talking with peers, or other activities that are not tied to learning. The current and proposed organization of time both support researched based instruction and professional collaboration among teachers and when it ensures adequate and appropriate learning opportunities for all students throughout the school day, student achievement will be enhanced. (classroom observations, building administrators, teacher interview)

Caseload and class size, in most cases, enable the NHS professional staff to individualize instruction and meet the needs of all students. The teacher-to-student ratio is currently 21:1 with a maximum of twenty-six allowed in each class. The teachers' contract specifically addresses the maximum caseload per teacher and that caseload is not to exceed 130 students per semester. The variation in class size is dictated by student interest level and course specific requirements and needs. Science labs cannot exceed the maximum number of twenty-four students as dictated by the National Science Teachers Association on the other hand, in music classes the enrollment in each class well exceeds the recommended enrollment as advised by the contract because of the need to bring a variety of musicians together to accomplish the performance standards and expectations. The larger class size has not effected the achievement of the students in music as evidenced by their outstanding performances and the national recognition that the school, the students and the teacher have received over many years. Over recent years, attrition has impacted class size and teacher course load. As teachers have retired, they have not been replaced. The greatest impact of this practice has been felt by special education and art. Norwalk High School utilizes a co-taught model in many classroom settings. While this should provide the opportunity to greatly increase the personalization for the students who are struggling, the class sizes are also increased in these settings and detract from the extra support that can be provided through the incorporation of two professional staff in the classroom. It is noted that in some honors classes there are as few as fifteen students enrolled in the class, while the classes that are co-taught frequently have upwards of twenty-six students. English language learner (ELL) students who are included in regular instruction are challenged by the class sizes and the lack of individualized instruction that can be afforded them. Teachers creatively assign student mentors to assist ELL students during instruction but often are unable to provide the instructional expertise themselves to these students as observed in some of the classrooms. In an ELL World History course, the teacher is able to accommodate the needs of each student despite their specific language deficits. On the contrary, in a co-taught Geometry class, the needs of the special education and English language learner students in the class were too diverse to be met adequately to ensure learning was taking place throughout the class. Worksheets were not modified to meet the needs of the verse learners and no small group conferences were observed that could support the struggling learner. Teachers are allotted time to collectively meet with one another to collect data, create unique lesson plans, and assist one another with modifications as needed. Many teachers offer a variety of approaches and modalities through their instruction in their classrooms however this practice is not consistent across all content areas and classrooms. Students who are in grade nine and ten are offered Academic Enhancement classes and freshmen are provided

additional support through a Freshman Studies class if they struggle with math and reading. The adherence to a maximum caseload per teacher and an allotment of time for teachers to collaborate will support individualize instruction and the expectation of meeting the needs of all students when consideration has been given to the extent that each teacher must individualize instruction to meet the needs of all students in each classroom. (classroom observations, teacher interviews, students, student shadowing, student work)

The principal informally works with other building leaders and provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The principal facilitates his vision for the school's core values, beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations for learning through the delegation and autonomy given to specific roles and responsibilities of each of the four housemasters utilizing the specific strengths of each of these leaders to meet the overall goals for the school. The housemasters have taken the lead role in bringing the core values beliefs and expectations to the forefront of all aspects of the school. The passion and personal belief in the school's core values and beliefs has paved a path for school improvement and a systemic approach to embed these beliefs and values into every aspect of the school's culture. The autonomy extended to the housemasters has resulted in significant accomplishments for both students and the school community. Opportunity for students to achieve the academic, social and civic competencies in an all-encompassing approach through the creation of such things as the Little Bear Café is just one example. The principles and practices that are necessary for the Café to be successful demonstrates instructional leadership that supports NHS's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.

The principal uses the monthly faculty meetings to keep teachers focused on the school's core values and beliefs about learning and instructional practices and holds weekly meetings with department heads. The principal believes that faculty meetings are extremely important to collaborate with the staff, but also feels that it is necessary and imperative for the housemasters and department heads to meet with their individual departments. It is the expectation of the principal that the information shared at the weekly department head meetings will be passed down from department head to teacher in smaller group settings. The degree that this expectation is implemented is varied which results in some teachers feeling more informed and prepared to meet the school's expectations than others. The principal's decision to directly support the academic, social and emotional competencies identified for NHS students is evidenced through his decision to support the advisory program and the implementation of the student-created internship program and Project Explore. The principal is very proud of the students of Norwalk High School and their capacity to demonstrate their achievement and leadership skills everyday through

the initiative they take to make NHS a better place for everyone. He displays this pride and encourages the initiative of the students to continue to think outside the box by communicating his support for the problem solving and critical thinking that plays a role in the students' decision-making. Most of the teachers and some of the students have a clear understanding of how their actions clearly reflect the expectations of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and core values. With greater collaboration and transparency, Norwalk High School's principal will expand instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations and lead to even greater accomplishments by all students at Norwalk High School in accessing the skills necessary to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. (building administrators, teacher interviews, students, self-study, student shadowing)

Teachers, students and parents are involved in the decision-making at Norwalk High School that promotes responsibility and ownership. Active engagement by all stakeholders, teachers, students and parents, in the Norwalk High School community contributes to a shared ownership and responsibility for the positive culture and climate of NHS. Norwalk Public Schools has surveyed parent and students to gain feedback from stakeholders in order to improve the district schools. The information from the survey is made public through a posting of the data on the schools' websites. That accounting for parent and student feedback occurred in 2010 and 2012 but not since then. Norwalk High School has a School Governance Council (SGC) that is comprised of seven parents, five certified staff, two students and the school principal. The SGC serves in an advisory capacity and is responsible for assisting the administration in making programmatic and operational changes to improve the school's achievement. The voices of these council members have the potential to make decisions that can impact the vision for NHS. In addition to the SGC, a proposal was put forward to develop another faculty-administrator council. The mission of this second council would involve a larger number of the school's stakeholders in the decision-making and assist in the transparency and ownership. The formation of this second council, a faculty senate, was not given approval by the building principal. Parent groups and clubs such as the Fathers Club, the African American Parent Outreach, the Hispanic Parents Outreach, the , the PTO, and the parents group associated with the music department, Parents for Norwalk High, significantly impact the outcomes for many aspects of the school making things possible that otherwise might not be. Teachers, students, and parents are provided opportunities to be involved in the decision-making processes at Norwalk High School and increased collaboration and communication will result in additional ownership and responsibility for decisions. (teacher interviews, building administrators, central office personnel)

Teachers routinely exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. The culture and the climate of Norwalk High School speaks to the involvement on the part of the professional staff to improve student learning. Throughout the building there is evidence of the message sent about the core values, beliefs and expectations for student learning in wall murals, student and staff recognition and pride in the accomplishments of projects such as the Little Bear Café. The student involvement to create the café and the interdisciplinary involvement of the arts to create a welcoming and successful venture for students is evidence of the teacher leadership at NHS. After visits to other schools in Connecticut such as Amity High School, teachers brought Link Crew to the school building recognizing the need of the freshmen to have a more personalized link to the school in order to make a successful transition. Teachers lead the campus clean-up as well as "Green and White Day" which promotes school spirit on Fridays. Teachers support student involvement in Safe Zone, Safe Rides and the creation of the Positive Behavioral Intervention Support (PBIS) annual lunch for students' random acts of kindness. Finally, teachers have actively participate in the improvement of the school through leadership positions as department heads, curriculum and educational leaders, and members of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) teams. As a result of the willingness of teachers to assume leadership positions and to role model initiative for ongoing school involvement and improvement, students at Norwalk High School will continue to make progress academically and socially throughout their high school years. (teacher interviews, building administrators, classroom observations)

The school board, the superintendent, and the principal work at creating collaborative, reflective, and constructive partnerships in order to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations for all students. Over the course of the last ten years, there has been many visions for Norwalk High School that have not been able to come to fruition as the result of a constant turnover in the leadership both at the central office and at the high school. This turn over has to some degree seen starts and stops to initiatives that did not have time to get off the ground before there was a new leader directing the district and the high school. A nation-wide search for a district leader resulted in the appointment of an award winning, nationally recognized superintendent. A district strategic plan was created and set in motion before his departure after a year and a half. An interim superintendent has assumed the leadership role until a new appointment can be made. The school board is committed to resuming the forward motion of the former superintendent's strategic plan that was set in place to create consistency of vision. This plan includes strengthening a formalized literacy policy, an improved plan for professional development and learning, and common assessments across the district that includes, but is not limited to, internal common

assessments that will result in data that will drive curriculum, instruction and assessment. Presently, the interim superintendent acknowledges the need to streamline the school's initiatives that are in place to more effectively meet the goals that are embedded in the strategic plan. The principal and superintendent meet three times a month. These meetings are outlined in the school board's meeting minutes. In addition to meetings with central office, the principal works very closely with the school board and holds a variety of meetings with the members. The school board supports the principal in his role as building leader not only because they hold the elected position and are responsible to the community but because they have a personal investment in their own children that attend NHS. When the school and the district establish consistency in the positions of superintendent and principal collaborative, reflective, and constructive partnerships can be formed to ensure student achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (central office personnel, building administrators, board of education, teacher interviews,

The school board and superintendent provide the principal with limited decision- making authority to lead the school. The school board provides authority to the principal for leading Norwalk High School to the degree that is stated within the district board policies. The principal has the ability to create a hiring committee for any staff to offer input on the hiring of new employees. Recommendations from the principal are sent to the human resources department at central office. The deputy superintendent has the final decision in the hiring of personnel however, the school board stated that they almost always defer to the principal when it comes to hiring decisions. Decisions regarding budget and staffing are determined at the district level and are based on student enrollment and the needs of the district as a whole. There are two other high schools in the district that calculate into the formula of the budget and meeting the needs of the school. The insufficient staffing levels, lack of instructional materials, challenges with technology, inadequate supplies and resources of the library media center lead the professional staff of NHS to believe that the school board does not give the principal adequate decision making authority to effectively run the school in a manner that is consistent with core values, beliefs and expectations for learning that were envisioned for NHS. Until such time that there is stability in district leadership, a consistent vision and greater autonomy given to the leadership at Norwalk High School, the professional staff of NHS will not fully realize the effort and commitment they put into assuring that all students are able to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (central office personnel, building administrators, central office personnel, teacher interviews, self-study)

**Commendations:**

1. The outstanding student culture, community, and overall morale
1. The leadership opportunities provided by the principal to the housemasters
2. The Norwalk High School student involvement in clubs and organizations
3. The Norwalk High School teachers' ability to promote students to participate and get involved in extracurricular activities
4. The Norwalk community financial support for events, field trips, performing arts and much more
5. The sense of leadership, stability, dedication, and support provided by the housemasters
6. The opportunity and support for clubs and the growth of various organizations by the principal
7. The safety, security, and sense of well-being across the school building provide by the school's security employees
8. The vision of the advisory committee that offers every child the opportunity to build a relationship with an adult other than their specified guidance counselor
9. The implementation of the research-based evaluation model, System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED) with additional components added to meet the needs of the school in achieving its core values, beliefs and expectations for learning
10. The School Governance Council that provides an opportunity for teachers, students, parents to have a voice and promote changes within the Norwalk High School community
11. The relationships that are created amongst the teachers and students that demonstrate dedication and mutual respect within the Norwalk High School community
12. The Link Crew program that provides opportunity for upperclassmen to mentor new students to NHS to take on leadership roles in guiding other students in being responsible, giving members to the school community
13. Project Explore and internships which allow students to be innovative and to use their interests and creativity in an entrepreneurial manner to become responsible members of a global society

**Recommendations:**

1. Create greater opportunities for the involvement of meaningful and defined roles in decision making by the teachers, students, and parents in partnership with the administration to promote responsibility and increased ownership in the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations
2. Demonstrate a strong and cohesive instructional leadership that promotes the school's core values and beliefs while further enhancing teacher pedagogy
3. Align high-quality professional development with the goals and objectives of the school's improvement plans

4. Analyze and investigate class size and composition to enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students
5. Examine the utilization of time on learning relative to the bell schedule and staffing to ensure that all students are provided the opportunity to successfully achieve the school's expectations for learning and college and career readiness
6. Ensure that teacher initiative and leadership is openly received and considered in the improvement of the school and student learning
7. Create a culture of collaboration and sustainability that ensures that the school board, superintendent, and principal consistently move forward with a vision for NHS to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
8. Provide sufficient autonomy and decision-making authority to the principal so that he can successfully accomplish the goals identified by the stakeholders of the school

**6**

**School Resources for Learning**

*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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.

## **Conclusions**

Norwalk High School has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for a large majority of students, including identified and at-risk students that support the students' achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The faculty and staff works collaboratively to provide additional services to students in need of support. Numerous school-based programs have been developed to provide intervention strategies. The Student Response Team (SRT) in conjunction with a Scientific Research-Based Intervention (SRBI) model is used to address concerns and develop a plan of action for intervention. The goal is to help students provide student supports in the general education setting to increase the likelihood of success. When there is a need, a model is in place for identifying students who have specialized learning needs and members of the student services team ensure that all students receive the services appropriate to them. Services are delivered through a continuum of approaches (inclusion, co-taught, academic support, self-contained instruction) providing the least restrictive setting for identified students based on their needs. Programs such as Link Crew, Check and Connect Mentoring Programing, peer tutoring, APEX online credit recovery and Carver Youth Development Program (Carver YDP) have been developed and are in place to provide significant support to those students with academic and emotional needs. In addition, collaboration with outside organizations and parent groups such as Norwalk Youth Services Juvenile Review Board, Saturday Academy, and the Norwalk High School Fathers Club provide additional layers of resources and support to the school community. The Instructional Data Teams (IDTs) provide a system for developing, reviewing and calibrating student assessments. Assessment results are utilized to target remedial instruction practices within the general education setting. IDTs comprised of support service leaders are also used to meet the academic, social, and civic 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Through the effective coordination of an identification and intervention process coupled with multiple internal and external student support services and programs, the needs of a large majority of students at Norwalk High School are met and supported so that they may successfully achieve the school's of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (board of education, department leaders, teacher interviews, teachers, students, parents, self-study, school support staff, school leadership, Endicott survey)

Norwalk High School provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services. Norwalk High School teachers, administrators, social workers, and guidance staff make a significant and concerted effort to engage parents and families in the scholastic and interscholastic lives of their children, especially those in need. Effective communication tools are

used to provide parents with timely and important information about student supports. Some examples of parent and community communication tools include PowerSchool parent portal, the parents for Norwalk High School homepage, newsletters, email blasts, telephone calls and automated telephone contacts. Students in need of additional supports benefit from more intensive outreach efforts from the Norwalk High School student services team. These include more frequent parent and family contacts, home visits from the school social worker, referral to the Norwalk Youth Services Juvenile Review Board, and referral for supports from the school-based health center. Students identified with special needs receive more frequent and intensive communications through Planning and Placement Team meetings, IEP development meetings and evaluation review processes. The Endicott survey clearly shows that students and parents agree that the information about students support services is effectively communicated and readily available. As a result of the multiple methods of communication by Norwalk High School administration, faculty and staff, the school is able to effectively provide parents and families with extensive information to support the success of all students in reaching the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (board of education, department leaders, teacher interviews, teachers, students, parents, self-study, school support staff, school leadership, Endicott survey)

Norwalk High School support service staff use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student. Technology resources are used to provide comprehensive guidance, special education and health services to all students. Upgrades to the technology infrastructure by installing Wi-Fi access points throughout the school have built increased capacity for students, staff and faculty to access Internet in pursuit of the Norwalk High School's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Despite initial advancements in technology infrastructure, there is a lack of district level support to ensure that appropriate professional development and training is provided to allow effective use of technology. The four Norwalk High School technology coaches, teachers serving in this role in lieu of a duty during one period each day, do their best to address the immediate needs of the school, but are not prepared to manage all needs in a timely manner. Numerous teachers express significant frustration in the process of entering help needs into the system and the lag in response time for having needs addressed. These disruptions are problematic and impact efficient and effective use of instructional time when attempting to infuse technology. In alignment with technology infrastructure upgrades, two classroom sets of twenty-four Chromebooks were provided to each department as well as a set for the library and a set for the special education department. SmartBoards or comparable projectors with MobiPads have been provided to a vast majority of classrooms throughout the school. Norwalk High School adopted the Google platform, which has contributed to and enhanced the communication among

students, teachers, staff and parents. The newly adopted PowerSchool web-based student data management system has been implemented and efforts have been made to provide additional training and support by members of the Norwalk High School administration. Other software tools include Naviance, Research Study Island, Apex Learning and IEP Direct. These technology tools assist in the delivery of student support services and the implementation of student success planning. Through the use of technology, Norwalk High School support staff delivers a range of coordinated services for each student that increases capacity to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (department leaders, teacher interviews, teachers, students, parents, self-study, school support staff, school leadership, Endicott survey)

Norwalk High School counseling services have an adequate number of certified school counselors and support staff; however, the number of staff is minimally acceptable to meet the needs of the school as a whole. A continuum of school counseling services are integrated throughout the Norwalk High School community. The ratio of school counselors to students is approximately 220 students per counselor with reduced caseloads for department chairs providing adequate services to effectively meet the needs of all students. A developmental guidance curriculum has been developed and implemented through a combination of individual, small group and whole-class meetings. Counselors meet at least twice per year with all students to provide supports in alignment with the prescribed and posted goals for each grade level. Individual and group meetings are held within each grade to address career and college readiness, course planning, preparation for PSAT (Let's Get Ready" training), SAT and ACT assessments. School counselors make referrals to the one full-time and two part-time school social workers; however, needs exceed the level of social worker staffing which presents a strain on addressing the social and emotional needs of the NHS student. The full-time social worker meets with each student annually, limiting the ability to meet with students on an as- needed basis. Lack of social worker staffing creates a necessity to address the most serious issues first, leaving less serious issues unaddressed to potentially develop into a crisis. In addition to internal supports, the Norwalk Community Services Juvenile Review Board and the Carver YDP are utilized to meet students' needs. The school counseling department uses ongoing, relevant assessment data and feedback from multiple sources (students, parents, faculty, surveys, interdepartmental discussions) to ensure that student needs are addressed during their time at Norwalk High School in pursuit of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Because the school's guidance department provides high quality service delivery, communication, collaboration and interventions, student's ability to improve learning, support their well being and achieve the school's learning expectations is enhanced. (board of education,

department leaders, teacher interviews, teachers, students, parents, self-study, school support staff, Endicott survey)

Norwalk High School's health services department has an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff that provide both preventative health and direct intervention services to the student population informed through effective data collection and assessment strategies. There are two programs within Norwalk High School that provide health services and interventions to the students. The nurse's responsibilities include vision and hearing exams, monitoring and administering medications, maintaining students' records including vaccinations and physicals, and providing inter-school communication on a variety of health related issues. Direct intervention services include evaluating and triaging illness and injuries, and emergency treatments ranging from minor first-aid to emergency response services. It was noted within the self-study report and supported by additional evidence that school nurses receive regular training and support coordinated by the Norwalk Director of Health Services. A medical management software (SNAP Health Center) generates health records for each student, enabling monitoring of required compliance, in-depth reporting, billing to insurances, and documentation that allows the health service staff to analyze and promote communication. The health service professionals expressed concerns about a lack of dedicated and secure fax machines and copiers to ensure confidentiality of necessary communications. There are two fax machine in the building, one in the main office and one in the career center, neither of which provide the confidentiality necessary for health office transmissions. Students access primary health services through typical procedures and communication with the professional staff. If the nurse's office determines that the needs of the student or school personnel are in excess of what they are capable of providing, they refer students to the Robert E. Appleby Health Center, located within the school campus. At this school-based health center, students can receive more intensive physical and mental health support services from qualified personnel. The Robert E. Appleby Health Center is staffed by a licensed physician, physician assistant, advanced practice registered nurse, a licensed clinical social worker along with administrative support staff. All students have access to these services regardless of their financial situation with no direct fees being charged to students or families. As an additional benefit, student physicals are conducted to support state mandates required for school attendance and athletics. According to the Dr. Robert E. Appleby SBHC 2013-2014 statistics, 1,648 visits were made to the center, an average of twenty students per day, by 695 students. The percentage of students able to return to class following a visit to the SBHC was a highly impressive 98 percent, demonstrating the effectiveness and efficiency of this program. A further added benefit of this program relates to their integration of health instruction, which

occurred in sixteen classes throughout the year. In conjunction with internal health services and the Appleby Health Center, outside organizations and agencies are effectively utilized to provide supplemental supports to students determined to need such services. Collaboration with outside organizations exist with the Norwalk Community Services Juvenile Review Board, Norwalk Community Health Center and the American Cancer Society. Additionally, a mobile dental program entitled Norwalk Smiles is available to provide cleanings and referrals for free local dental services for more significant student dental needs. Due to

Norwalk High School's exemplary model for both prevention and intervention health care services, the students of NHS are provided with services that enhance and improve the students' well being and support the school's core values and beliefs. (department leaders, teacher interviews, teachers, students, parents, self-study, school support staff, school leadership, Endicott survey)

Norwalk High School's library media services employ an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who work to integrate the library media services into the curriculum and instructional practices of the building. The Norwalk High School library media center is staffed by one full-time certified library media specialist and one full-time library assistant. Results from the Endicott survey show that over 58 percent of the staff disagrees that the library has sufficient library media personnel and support staff. Subsequent to the decrease in funding for library media staffing, the library media specialist has relied upon student and parent volunteers and teachers' duty schedules to supplement the reduction. The library media specialist collaborates with the classroom teachers to support classroom instruction related to research methods and supplements this work through a designated website (Research Island). The LMC produces regular newsletters to communicate current events, library updates to resources and services and to solicit volunteers and feedback. The library media specialist has supplemented the lack of print materials with the acquisition of online databases such as ICON provided through the library OPAC, Destiny. The library media specialist is currently planning a shift from the current library practices to a Learning Commons model. Related to the Learning Commons initiative, initial transitions from traditional desktop computer labs to the use of web-based Google Chromebook mobile stations are being implemented. The library media center is staffed by LMC personnel from 7:15 a.m. to 3:00 .m.. Students are able to access the LMC outside of school hours when accompanied by a member of the faculty or staff. Donations enable the LMC to provide materials for students' interests and needs in order to support individual leaning. Through a survey of all Norwalk High School students, library skill deficiencies were identified and instructional practices were developed around source citations, web evaluation and source diversity. According to the

Endicott survey, a majority, (67.2 percent) of students agree that the library media center has the resources they need and 72.3 percent believe that it is accessible before, during and after school. Contrary to the positive attempts by the library media specialist to improve the library atmosphere and offerings, the library media center is not widely utilized by students or staff to the extent that it could be. Through the ongoing assessment of library media services including feedback from the school community, NHS's library media personnel and support staff will effectively integrate services into the curriculum and instructional practices that are responsive to students' interests and needs. (department leaders, teacher interviews, teachers, students, parents, self-study, school support staff, school leadership, Endicott survey)

Norwalk High School has an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff to provide support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners. The Norwalk High School student services department consists of twelve special education teachers, ten related service staff members, fourteen paraprofessionals, one clerical specialist, eight guidance counselors and two English language learner (ELL) teachers. The special education staff has an average caseload of fifteen students and there are 56 students in the ELL program. Special education service providers collaborate with general education teachers, related service providers and parents to implement, monitor and adjust Individualized Education Plans to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Service delivery models include the full continuum of service delivery opportunities. These include integration in general education classes with academic supports and differentiated curriculum and assessments, co-taught core courses at each grade level, and self-contained classes for students with needs that require small, structured, individualized learning environments to meet IEP goals. The team ensures that identified students receive their education in the least restrictive environment appropriate to meet their needs and allow them to successfully attain the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The Best Buddies program provides special education students with a peer buddy from general education with a focus on social skill development. This program improves social and civic inclusion and community support in order to attain the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Individualized Education Plans and mandated triennial review assessments measure and report student growth to the Planning and Placement Team. Triennial achievement assessments coupled with classroom-based assessments and teacher reports serve as a benchmark for the development of appropriate student goals. According to the Endicott survey, 67 percent of staff members believe that collaboration between special education and general education teachers is effective. Because Norwalk High School provides an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff to meet the

needs of identified students, all NHS students have access to the curriculum and instruction that will enable them to reach the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations for learning. (department leaders, teacher interviews, teachers, students, parents, self-study, school support staff, school leadership, Endicott survey)

**Commendations:**

1. The rich variety of programs and services to ensure timely, coordinated and directive intervention strategies to support students' achievement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
2. The comprehensive school counseling services that provide a continuum of resources and programs to support the diverse needs of students and the entire school community
3. The multiple avenues of communication and outreach efforts used to inform and involve members of the school community in student support services and programs
4. The initial development and implementation of a Learning Commons more aligned with 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
5. The comprehensive school health care services and community-based programs provide additional physical and mental health services to ensure that the members of the school community receive appropriate health care
6. The comprehensive special education programs and staffing that provide a continuum of supports and services for identified students which is required to access an appropriate learning environment relative to their needs

**Recommendations:**

1. Evaluate the need for increasing the availability of internal and external social services based on the needs of the student population
2. Evaluate school-wide technology infrastructure barriers that are obstacles to effective technology integration
3. Improve technology staffing supports at Norwalk High School and at the district level to ensure consistent access is provided for instructional needs
4. Ensure ongoing assessment of the library media services so as to keep pace with the curriculum and instructional needs of staff and students in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations





## Community Resources for Learning

*The achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

## **Conclusions**

The community and the district's governing body provide funding for ongoing professional development and curriculum revision but funding for sufficient professional and support staff, a full range of technology support, equipment and instructional materials and supplies is not dependable. There have been cuts in recent years due to budget deficits that have impacted staffing, professional development and maintenance of school facilities. Norwalk High School provides a range of excellent school programs and services to students however the funding for these programs and services is neither consistent nor dependable. Students who participate in the music program and are members of the nationally recognized Norwalk High School Band travel to competitions and are required to pay for travel and uniforms. There is sufficient funding for professional and support staff as well as adequate technology support but the reductions in staff do not permit NHS to implement programs and best practices such as IDT without there being an impact on time on learning and enrichment courses that could otherwise be afforded to the students. Wireless Internet has been installed throughout the building and new Google Chromebooks have been purchased, however staff training has not kept pace with the introduction of these new technologies. During the 2014-2015 school year, four Technology coaches were added to assist staff with technology issues and that has had a positive effect on technology training. Professional development is provided for NHS professional staff however a lack of funding for ongoing training and support reduces the effectiveness of the professional development. Teachers do not receive funding to attend conferences outside of the school. Instructional support has been reduced significantly in several departments and curriculum revision is totally grant funded through Title 2A, resulting in a lack of regular and ongoing revisions. The district has not provided dependable funding for instructional materials and supplies that can vary from department to department and, in some cases, funding totally relies on grants and fundraising efforts. While the district governing board does provide funding for programs and personnel as well as professional development and curriculum revision, the current budget does not adequately meet the needs of NHS for staffing, professional development, technology, and classroom supplies that will ensure that all students can successfully achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (teacher interviews, facility tour, students, parents, FY2010/11, FY2011/12, FY2012/13, FY2013/14 budgets, school resource officer, Standard subcommittee members)

The school has developed plans to fund programs to ensure the maintenance of the school building and school plant, to properly maintain, catalogue and replace equipment and to keep the school

relatively clean on a daily basis. There is currently thirteen custodial staff at Norwalk High School as well as a new online system, SchoolDude, intended to ensure maintenance and repair of the building and school plant is reported and addressed in real time. Despite the number of custodial staff employed to maintain the building and to implement a new system for reporting, there are still some work orders that are not completed in a timely manner. Staffing can be inconsistent due to sick time and vacation time by the custodial staff which often results in inconsistent cleanliness to the building. A reduction in staffing for any reason is not covered and the cleanliness of the building is affected. Maintenance and repairs are managed through the central office and the building principal is given little autonomy in prioritizing and seeing to it that the work is completed to meet the needs of the staff, students and overall operation of the building. Although the building has a new boiler, old piping throughout the structure has caused heating and ventilation problems, especially during winter when entire classrooms have been evacuated because of cold temperatures in the classroom. The Automated Building System (ABS) temperature control software is outdated and cannot be accessed via the Internet from off site. One of the seven stairwells has no heating and becomes uncomfortably cold during the winter. A plan to remedy the cold temperatures in the classrooms for the next winter season is in place and will address some of the piping issues and will include repair to pumps and the addition of glycol (anti-freeze) to the water supply which will help prevent freezing in cold temperatures. In addition to the maintenance to the heating system, additional equipment that will be replaced includes an auto floor scrubber, shampoo machines and vacuum cleaners. The custodial staff does an adequate job of keeping the building clean however some classrooms appear cleaner than others indicating a lack of consistency from hallway to hallway. The tiles in the cafeteria are the original tiles when the school was built and need repair or replacement due to wear and tear. While the school funds a number of custodial staff and has taken steps to make the process of maintaining and repairing the building more streamlined, the budget does not keep up with the needs of a building utilized by a large student body and a number of extracurricular activities and is showing signs of aging and requires ongoing HVAC repairs necessary to maintain a safe and healthy teaching and learning environment. (interview with chief financial officer (CFO), director of facilities, and other administration officials, school budget 2013-2014, school support staff, facility tour, Standard subcommittee members, Endicott survey)

A long-range plan which addresses programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs and capital improvements has been in place since 2010 and is funded by the community. The launch of Norwalk Early College Academy (NECA), a “P-Tech” model school partnering with IBM and Norwalk Community College was started in school year 2014-2015. The

advisory program is in its second year, Project Explore, Little Bear Café, the Den and LinkCrew are new programs, some funded by the school and some not. For example, LinkCrew faculty will not be compensated but will fill the responsibility through a duty. This approach to implementation of LinkCrew threatens the elimination of a program that has had a significant impact on the transition of students into Norwalk High School. Staff attrition has resulted in a permanent loss of classroom positions and although it has not negatively impacted class size and class load, it has affected the number of programs that can be afforded to students to enhance and enrich their education in order for NHS to provide necessary practices that can improve teaching and learning. A technology plan was renewed for three years beginning in 2012 with a goal of integrating technology into the curriculum across all levels grades PreK-12, providing for classroom instruction that promotes problem-solving communication and presentation skills, and accessing research-based professional development training. Wireless Internet capability has been installed; PowerSchool, an online student management tool, has been implemented, Naviance, a tool used to promote college and career readiness, is available to all students; and a significant number of Chromebooks have been placed in classrooms to support the learning of all students. The challenge with the recent enhancements to the school building of all the technology is the lack of vision for training staff to effectively be prepared to deliver the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to the students using these tools. Rapid turnover of key personnel in Central Office has impeded efforts to fully implement long range plans and provide support for follow-through actions. There is currently an interim superintendent, and a recently hired facilities manager and chief financial officer—all key positions that influence the long range planning process. When a long-range plan is established and consistently funded by the community, students will have enhanced opportunities to meet the learning goals. (2013-2014 budget, facility tour, chief financial officer (CFO), building support staff, teacher interviews, Standard subcommittee members)

Faculty and building administrators are invited to provide input into the development of the budget and are responsible for implementing the budget once it is committed to Norwalk High School. The city's budget and the Norwalk Board of Education Department develop the budget for Norwalk High School. The timeline for the development of the budget is posted and made available to the public. Norwalk High School's stakeholders along with the stakeholders from the other schools in the district are invited to provide public comment and input into the allocations necessary to meet the programmatic needs of the school. Allotments are based on student enrollment so some needs at Norwalk High School may not be met each budget year. The principal has the ultimate responsibility of implementing the budget that is provided to the school. Included in the operating budget for the school are funds for

professional development, workshops and trainings, and supplies. Input is solicited from the housemasters and the department heads by the principal and monies are then allocated to each of the departments in the school. The department heads distribute the funds to meet the needs of curriculum and instruction with input from the teachers. Lack of consistent planning and recent cuts to the budget have led some teachers to conduct their own fundraising to purchase school supplies needed to provide instruction to the students. The need for new textbooks has gone unaddressed in some content areas, and curriculum revision plans have not been adequately funded to promote the necessary review and revision to keep pace with 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. Because the building administration and faculty are not actively involved in the development of the budget, full implementation of the goals and objectives of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations cannot be fully achieved without personal cost to the professional staff either for supplies or professional development. (2013-2014 budget, facility tour, chief financial officer building administrators, building support personnel, teacher interviews, Standard subcommittee members)

The school site and plant adequately support the delivery of school programs and services. The structure that houses Norwalk High School consists of 9 interlocking buildings and is more than 70 years old requiring a significant amount of maintenance on a daily basis in order to sustain a healthy teaching and learning environment. The grounds consist of twenty acres of athletic fields, a running track, seven tennis courts and parking for staff and students. The custodial staff operates in two shifts, day and evening and is responsible for cleanliness and maintenance of the plant and surrounding grounds. Services provided include instruction, career exploration, guidance counseling, social work services, nursing, security and special education. Food service is provided by an outside vendor, and the Appleby Student-Based Health Center (SBHC) is available to students for support with mental and physical health needs. The Day Street Clinic is a program that supports the dental needs of students while parent groups, student support groups and substance abuse prevention services (Al-a-teen) support the social/emotional needs of students. Other services include offering the PSAT testing to all 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders, "Let's Get Ready" SAT prep support, early college awareness nights, internships from Fairfield University, 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade transition supports and an ROTC program that gives students an opportunity to participate in community outreach and earn college credit. Because the school site and plant support the delivery of many quality school programs and services, Norwalk High School is able to commit its core values and beliefs for all students at NHS. (teacher interviews, 2013-2014 budget, facility tour, chief financial officer, building support personnel, Standard subcommittee members)

The school maintains documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. Norwalk High School has documentation to support that the school meets federal and state laws and is in compliance with local regulations. Most compliance reporting is kept on file at the central office however the high school maintains copies of Materials Safety Data for storage of all chemicals housed in the building, and validations for fire alarms, extinguishers, and the elevator. Swimming Pool and Food Service Inspection Reports are kept on file at the high school and are up to date. The NHS does have asbestos and an asbestos management plan was put in place however the plan has not been updated in over ten years. A private contractor has been hired to update this plan. Asbestos awareness training is scheduled for the end of March 2015, so that staff is current on asbestos management procedures. All areas of the building are handicap accessible with the exception of the upper level of the choir room which cannot be accessed by the elevator making it unavailable to persons with limited mobility. Inclusive handicap accessibility at the other district high school in Norwalk allows the district to be considered in compliance with this law. There is one small wooden ramp built by students outside the band storage room on the first floor for the purpose of moving heavy instruments up a flight of three stairs. This is an area of the building not for normal pedestrian traffic however the ramp is not in compliance with ADA requirements. Ventilation and temperature control are monitored and regulated by Automated Building System (ABS) temperature control software. Air quality control is checked periodically and vent filters are scheduled to be changed once per year, however some vents have gone for longer periods before being switched out. Custodial staff receives OSHA training annually to stay updated on federal, state, and local mandates and requirements. While the physical plant and facilities meet applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety, failure to meet ADA regulations in all areas of the building and an outdated asbestos management plan will require immediate attention to maintain a safe and equitable learning environment for all faculty and students. (teacher interviews, 2013-2014 budget, facility tour with Head Custodian, chief financial officer, building support personnel, food service inspection report, public swimming pool inspection report)

Professional staff is actively engages 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. Norwalk High School is making efforts on numerous fronts to more actively engage parents in the educational process. Communication with families includes teacher contact by phone, email, and letters home, in language other than English if necessary. A focus on communication between the school and home was targeted as a priority through a quantitative accounting that impacts teachers' evaluation. Report cards and

interim reports provide written documentation of student progress, and PowerSchool software allows students and parents online access to real-time grades in all student courses and achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Teachers have the capability of attaching notes electronically to student grades on assignments and assessments in PowerSchool providing greater clarification on the student's progress. There is an automated alert system that sends out important information by computerized phone calls to ensure the outreach is inclusive of all families in the school. The school has an updated website with a wide array of information including upcoming activities, a school calendar, information on extracurricular and parent activities, and most importantly, this information is available in many different languages. Parents are involved throughout the school year in events that showcase student talent and progress such as musical concerts, art shows and other presentations. Guidance conducts parent meetings regarding preparation for college and career readiness. As a result of recent technology updates at Norwalk High School and an emphasis placed on the importance of communication between school and home, active engagement of parents and families as partners in each student's education enhances student achievement. (teacher interviews, students, parents, school support staff, Standard subcommittee members)

The school develops productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning. Norwalk High School has built a broad base of partnerships with community, parents, businesses and higher education that not only supports student learning but also provides a rich real-world experience that prepares the students of NHS for college and career. The innovative partnership between Norwalk High School, IBM and Norwalk Community College (NCC) has resulted in the creation of Norwalk Early College Academy (NECA), which will award students enrolled in NECA a high school diploma and allows students then to earn college credit leading toward an associate's degree after completing the required curriculum for graduation. NECA is in the pilot stage and while schedule conflicts sometimes prevent the continuous interaction between NCC instructors and the students the initial launch of the program has resulted in a strong enrollment by freshmen entering NHS. During the last four weeks of their senior year, students are provided an opportunity to experience a job internship with local companies in the Norwalk geographic area. Students are provided with opportunities to visit colleges such as University of Connecticut, Stony Brook and trips to other countries such as Spain and France, which encourage students to participate in real world activities that link classroom knowledge with authentic applications. Partnerships with the parents have enabled students with a love and talent for music to travel, compete and earn national recognition for that their talent and accomplishments in music performance. As a result of the partnerships that have been forged

between Norwalk High School, parents and the greater community of Norwalk, students at NHS are provided with the opportunity to effectively engage, most specifically, in the social competencies that are part of Norwalk High School's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning. (teacher interviews, students, support staff interviews, panel presentation)

### **Commendations:**

1. The wide range of excellent school programs and services provided to students that support the learning process
2. The new software such as *PowerSchool* for grade management and *SchoolDude* for building maintenance accounting improves teacher communication with parents and students and helps facility managers prioritize work orders
3. The launch of Norwalk Early College Academy (NECA), a "P-Tech" model school partnering with IBM and Norwalk Community College
4. The opportunity for students to earn college credit or an Associate's Degree while attending high school
5. The number of capital improvements to the high school including replacing of carpet with tile in the main corridor and ramp area and a \$40,000,000 renovation project that finished in 2012
6. The purchase of New Chrome Books, LCD projectors and Smart Boards that significantly increase access to technology for staff and students
7. The efforts on numerous fronts to more actively engage parents in the educational process

### **Recommendations:**

1. Ensure adequate and dependable funding for the wide range school programs and services offered at Norwalk High School
2. Ensure adequate funding for professional development in technology and curriculum revision
3. Ensure funding for follow on repairs and maintenance of new technology
4. Plan for budget deficiencies that may impact the quality of maintenance and cleanliness throughout the school building
5. Implement a short-term plan to repair piping and ventilation associated with cold or overheated classroom
6. Bring the ramp located near the band storage room up to ADA code.

7. Update the asbestos management plan and ensure that the plan remains current until removal of the asbestos can be made possible
8. Continue to develop and enhance the partnership for the NECA program through examination of the school's schedule and clear expectations for student support and rigor
9. Expand involvement of faculty and building administration in the development and implementation of the school's budget
10. Consider compensation for advisors who lead and manage programs such as LinkCrew that positively impact the culture and climate of the school
11. Explore ways to further improve parent participation in school programs

## FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

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 Norwalk High 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 Committee requires that the evaluation report be made public in accordance with the Committee'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 Committee 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 Committee requires that the principal of Norwalk High School 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 Committee 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 Committee 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 Committee has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Committee within sixty days (60) of occurrence any substantive change which negatively impacts on the school's adherence to the Committee'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 Committee's Substantive Change Policy is included in the Appendix on page xx. 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 Committee office has current statistical data on the school.

The Committee 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 Committee'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 Committee staff following the on-site visit.

**(Chair: It would be appropriate here for the visiting committee to express some brief words of appreciation regarding the hospitality extended to them. Keep the statement concise and general, however, since its relevance may be lost over the ten-year life of the evaluation.)**

**Norwalk High School  
NEASC Accreditation Visit  
March 22-25, 2015**

**Visiting Committee**

<p><b>Chair</b> Catherine Knowles Wachusett Regional School District Holden, MA 01520</p> <p><b>Assistant Chair</b> Jaya Vijayasekar Vernon Public Schools Vernon, CT 06066</p> <p><b>Standard 1</b> <b>Core Values, Beliefs, Expectations</b> Melanie Deninger West Haven High School West Haven, CT 06516</p> <p>Monica Kreuzer Amity Regional Senior High School Woodbridge, CT 06525</p> <p><b>Standard 2</b> <b>Curriculum</b> Mark Szczesiul Enrico Fermi High School Enfield, CT 06082</p> <p><b>Standard 3</b> <b>Instruction</b> Stuart Younse Simsbury High School Simsbury CT 06070</p> <p>Lindsay Maguire Lawrence Public Schools Lawrence, MA</p>	<p><b>Standard 4</b> <b>Assessment</b> Amy Deeb Newtown High School New Town, CT 06482</p> <p>Timothy Jepson Triton Regional High School Byfield, MA</p> <p><b>Standard 5</b> <b>School Culture and Leadership</b> Denise Sgandurra Masuk High School Monroe, CT 06468</p> <p>Daniel Blanchard New Britain High School New Britain, CT 06051</p> <p><b>Standard 6</b> <b>School Resources for Learning</b> Steve LePage Plainville High School Plainville, CT 06062</p> <p>Christine Guy New Bedford High School New Bedford, MA 02740</p> <p><b>Standard 7</b> <b>Community Resources for Learning</b> Daniel Rouse Dedham High School Dedham, MA 02026</p> <p>Ellen Kokinidis Chelsea High School Chelsea, MA 02150</p>
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## NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS &amp; COLLEGES

## Committee on Public Secondary Schools

## SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

Principals of member schools must report to the Committee 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 Committee'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

## Norwalk High School

### Commendations

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

1. The collaborative and inclusive process used by the Norwalk school community to identify core values and beliefs
2. The time dedicated to researching and ensuring that all stakeholders in the decision process had a clear understanding of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills prior to determining the school communities' expectations for learning
3. The use of the acronym B.E.A.R.S. to increase awareness of the core values and beliefs
4. The creation of the school advisory council to assist the school administration in making programmatic and operational changes to improve school achievement
5. The use of Instructional Data Teams (IDTs) to consistently gather data that will inform instruction

#### **Curriculum**

1. The concerted efforts to revise existing curriculum documents to reflect 21<sup>st</sup> century learning
2. The adoption of a curriculum template that emphasizes rigor and ensures consistency of expectations across the school
3. The development of curriculum binders to align taught curriculum among teachers of common courses
4. The cross-curricular initiatives between some of the subject areas
5. The use of expert consultants in the curriculum revision process

#### **Instruction**

1. The ongoing use of IDTs to impact the ability of teachers to adjust their instructional practices in order to reach all students

2. The creation and use of school-wide rubrics aligned with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
3. The focus on engaging students as active and self-directed learners across the school both during learning activities and through self-reflection using the school-wide rubrics
4. The consistent close monitoring of students during instructional time to allow teachers to personalize instruction for students
5. The purposeful organization of group learning activities to ensure the needs of each student are met
6. The wide range of opportunities for students to contribute meaningfully to the school and larger community through classes designed around authentic tasks and products
7. The consistent effort of teachers to incorporate technology into instruction despite existing challenges

### **Assessment of and for Student Learning**

1. The use of IDTs to effectively monitor progress and achievement toward 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations at Norwalk High School
2. The allotment of time for IDTs within the daily schedule
3. The discussion of best practices and effective strategies toward meeting 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
4. The communication of expectations to students through rubrics
5. The successful implementation of a wide range of both formative and summative assessments throughout units of study
6. The timely and effective feedback through the use of technology (PowerSchool) which allows students to revise and improve their work in real time
7. The formative and summative assessments that allow for teachers to gather data to modify instruction
8. The dedicated reflection that honed the focus of eleven rubrics to seven rubrics
9. The extensive use of data to drive instruction to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
10. The time allotted to analyze data
11. The employment of formative assessments in a regular and varied manner to inform instructional process

### **School Culture and Leadership**

1. The outstanding student culture, community, and overall morale

2. The leadership opportunities provided by the principal to the housemasters
3. The Norwalk High School student involvement in clubs and organizations
4. The Norwalk High School teachers' ability to promote students to participate and get involved in extracurricular activities
5. The Norwalk community financial support for events, field trips, performing arts and much more
6. The sense of leadership, stability, dedication, and support provided by the housemasters
7. The opportunity and support for clubs and the growth of various organizations by the principal
8. The safety, security, and sense of well-being across the school building provide by the school's security employees
9. The vision of the advisory committee that offers every child the opportunity to build a relationship with an adult other than their specified guidance counselor
10. The implementation of the research-based evaluation model, System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED) with additional components added to meet the needs of the school in achieving its core values, beliefs and expectations for learning
11. The School Governance Council that provides an opportunity for teachers, students, parents to have a voice and promote changes within the Norwalk High School community
12. The relationships that are created amongst the teachers and students that demonstrate dedication and mutual respect within the Norwalk High School community
13. The Link Crew program that provides opportunity for upperclassmen to mentor new students to NHS to take on leadership roles in guiding other students in being responsible, giving members to the school community
14. The Project Explore which allows students to be innovative and to use their interests and creativity in an entrepreneurial manner to become responsible members of a global society

### **School Resources for Learning**

1. The rich variety of programs and services to ensure timely, coordinated and directive intervention strategies to support students' achievement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
2. The comprehensive school counseling services that provide a continuum of resources and programs to support the diverse needs of students and the entire school community
3. The multiple avenues of communication and outreach efforts used to inform and involve members of the school community in student support services and programs

4. The initial development and implementation of a Learning Commons more aligned with 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
5. The comprehensive school health care services and community-based programs provide additional physical and mental health services to ensure that the members of the school community receive appropriate health care
6. The comprehensive special education programs and staffing that provide a continuum of supports and services for identified students which is required to access an appropriate learning environment relative to their needs

### **Community Resources for Learning**

1. The wide range of excellent school programs and services provided to students that support the learning process
2. The new software such as *PowerSchool* for grade management and *SchoolDude* for building maintenance accounting improves teacher communication with parents and students and helps facility managers prioritize work orders
3. The launch of Norwalk Early College Academy (NECA), a “P-Tech” model school partnering with IBM and Norwalk Community College
4. The opportunity for students to earn college credit or an Associate’s Degree while attending high school
5. The number of capital improvements to the high school including replacing of carpet with tile in the main corridor and ramp area and a \$40,000,000 renovation project that finished in 2012
6. The purchase of New Chrome Books, LCD projectors and Smart Boards that significantly increase access to technology for staff and students
7. The efforts on numerous fronts to more actively engage parents in the educational process

## **Recommendations**

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

1. Develop a long-term plan to identify curriculum, instruction, assessment, policies, decisions, and resource allocations that require alignment of the school’s core values, beliefs, and learning expectations

2. Ensure the use of research-based best practices to review, revise and influence the core values, beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
3. Develop a long-term plan to regularly review and revise the core values, beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations that is inclusive of a variety of stakeholders

### **Curriculum**

1. Complete the revision to all curriculum and ensure all courses have a written curriculum
2. Document an ongoing revision curriculum revision cycle that includes the development, implementation and the evaluation of the curriculum in all content areas
3. Ensure that revision of curriculum reflects 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and is inclusive of the elective course offerings
4. Provide regular opportunities for all departments to meet with sending schools in order to foster vertical articulation
5. Ensure staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library media center are sufficient to fully implement the curriculum
6. Create consistency in the use of IDTs by providing administrative oversight and feedback
7. Expand cross-curricular initiatives to incorporate all subject areas

### **Instruction**

1. Continue to support Instructional Data Teams (IDTs) even through changes to the master schedule
2. Ensure that all teachers consistently emphasize higher order thinking in their instruction and assignments
3. Design lessons and assignments that consciously utilize differentiation strategies in order to meet the needs of all students
4. Encourage teachers of core classes to develop activities that enable students to apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks
5. Develop formal strategies for securing feedback from parents, students, and fellow teachers to improve instructional practice
6. Provide more frequent, substantial, and direct feedback to students to improve achievement

7. Ensure that the technology provided by the district can effectively support the teacher in all aspects of their instruction

### **Assessment of and for Student Learning**

1. Implement and increase the frequency of the use school-wide rubrics across all disciplines
2. Communicate academic expectations to students in the form of rubrics prior to assessments consistently across all subjects
3. Develop and implement a process to ensure teachers provide specific, timely and effective feedback by professional staff to all students on written work
4. Provide administrative feedback resulting from the minutes submitted from the IDT process and encourage outcomes that will drive best practices
5. Routinely modify instructional practices based on examination of individual student and school progress in achieving the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations routinely
6. Review rubrics with all stakeholders for better alignment with 21st century learning expectations across all disciplines
7. Develop and implement a process to ensure grading and reporting practices align with the school's core values and beliefs about learning

### **School Culture and Leadership**

1. Create greater opportunities for the involvement of meaningful and defined roles in decision making by the teachers, students, and parents in partnership with the administration to promote responsibility and increased ownership in the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations
2. Demonstrate a strong and cohesive instructional leadership that promotes the school's core values and beliefs while further enhancing teacher pedagogy
3. Align high-quality professional development with the goals and objectives of the school's improvement plans
4. Analyze and investigate class size and composition to enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students
5. Examine the utilization of time on learning relative to the bell schedule and staffing to ensure that all students are provided the opportunity to successfully achieve the school's expectations for learning and college and career readiness
6. Ensure that teacher initiative and leadership is openly received and considered in the improvement of the school and student learning

7. Create a culture of collaboration and sustainability that ensures that the school board, superintendent, and principal consistently move forward with a vision for NHS to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
8. Provide sufficient autonomy and decision-making authority to the principal so that he can successfully accomplish the goals identified by the stakeholders of the school

### **School Resources for Learning**

1. Evaluate the need for increasing the availability of internal and external social services based on the needs of the student population
2. Evaluate school-wide technology infrastructure barriers that are obstacles to effective technology integration
3. Improve technology staffing supports at Norwalk High School and at the district level to ensure consistent access is provided for instructional needs
4. Ensure ongoing assessment of the library media services so as to keep pace with the curriculum and instructional needs of staff and students in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations

### **Community Resources for Learning**

1. Ensure adequate and dependable funding for the wide range school programs and services offered at Norwalk High School
2. Ensure adequate funding for professional development in technology and curriculum revision  
Ensure funding for follow on repairs and maintenance of new technology
3. Plan for budget deficiencies that may impact the quality of maintenance and cleanliness throughout the school building
4. Implement a short-term plan to repair piping and ventilation associated with cold or overheated classroom
5. Bring the ramp located near the band storage room up to ADA code.
6. Update the asbestos management plan and ensure that the plan remains current until removal of the asbestos can be made possible
7. Continue to develop and enhance the partnership for the NECA program through examination of the school's schedule and clear expectations for student support and rigor

- 8.** Expand involvement of faculty and building administration in the development and implementation of the school's budget
- 9.** Consider compensation for advisors who lead and manage programs such as LinkCrew that positively impact the culture and climate of the school
- 10.** Explore ways to further improve parent participation in school programs