New England Association of School and Colleges, Inc.

Commission on Public Schools

Commission on Public Schools

Report of the Visiting Team for Ayer Shirley Regional High School

Ayer, MA

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School and Community Summary

School and Community Summary

Ayer and Shirley are located in Middlesex County Massachusetts, which is located in what is commonly referred to as Central Massachusetts. The two towns are located approximately 30.4 miles northwest of Boston, Massachusetts and approximately 23.3 miles northeast of Worcester, Massachusetts (as the crow flies). Ayer is abutted by the towns of Littleton, Harvard, Shirley, and Groton. Shirley is abutted by the towns of Ayer, Harvard, Groton, Lancaster, and Lunenburg. Both Ayer and Shirley are middle-class communities; the median household income in Ayer is $63,063, and the median household income in Shirley is $68,864.

Ayer Shirley Regional High School is one of the schools in the Ayer Shirley Regional School District. There are four schools in the Ayer Shirley Regional School District; they are the Laura White Elementary School located in Shirley, the Page Hilltop Elementary School located in Ayer, the Ayer Shirley Regional Middle School located in Shirley, and the Ayer Shirley Regional High School located in Ayer. The racial/cultural/ethnic makeup of the Ayer Shirley Regional School District is as follows: African American 4.5 percent; Asian 2.6 percent; Hispanic 10.3 percent; Native American 0.5 percent; White 76.4 percent; Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander 0.4 percent; Multi Race, Non-Hispanic 5.3 percent.

District-wide, 25 percent of the families are economically disadvantaged, at Ayer Shirley Regional High School, 22.7 percent of the families are economically disadvantaged. Ayer is assessed 57 percent of the District school budget while Shirley is assessed 43 percent of the District school budget. As of the last reporting cycle, Ayer had an overall town budget of $24,339,967 of that amount $10,083,995 or 41.4 percent of the total town budget was dedicated to public education. As of the same reporting cycle, Shirley had an overall town budget of $13,385,866 of that amount $6,166,715 or 46.1 percent of the total town budget was dedicated to public education. The Ayer Shirley Regional School District, as of the last reporting cycle, spends $14,090.09 per pupil at the Ayer Shirley Regional High School.

Ayer Shirley Regional High School encompasses grades 9-12. The current student population at the high school is 409 students with 91.7 percent enrollment stability. In the year 2017, the four-year graduation rate at the high school was 92.9 percent, while the dropout rate in the same year was 5.9 percent. The attendance rate of students at the high school during the 2016-2017 school year was 93.2 percent, and the attendance rate of teachers as of June 30, 2017, was 95.89 percent.

In the class of 2017 16 percent of graduating seniors attended four-year private colleges, 46 percent of graduating seniors attended four-year public colleges, 20 percent of graduating seniors attended two-year public colleges and 1 percent of those graduating attended other post-secondary educational institutions. Of the remaining graduating seniors, 9 percent went directly into the workforce, 3 percent volunteered for the Military, and the post-secondary plans of the remaining 4 percent are unascertained.

Ayer Shirley Regional High School has several student recognition programs including National Honor Society, the John & Abigail Adams breakfast, Awards & Scholarship Night, the Advanced Placement Scholar Program, the National Merit Scholarship, and numerous school-based scholarships. The high school has developed strong college partnerships with Mount Wachusett Community College, Lesley University, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, and Fitchburg State College. Local educational opportunities available to students at the high school include Edgenuity online courses and the Middle College Program, which is part of the partnership with Mount Wachusett Community College. This program consists of having professors from Mount Wachusett Community College teach college courses at the high school; students who elect these courses receive three fully transferable college credits, in addition to high school credit for these courses.

Ayer Shirley Regional High School has developed several school/business partnerships. The most important of these partnerships may be the partnership between the District and the Ayer Police Department in which a School Resource Officer is assigned to the high school. This has been a very successful partnership as the School Resource Officer is thoroughly engaged with the students and is seen by the students as a positive and friendly resource, who is very approachable without being judgmental. The administration and the counseling office rely heavily on this officer as well. Another important business partnership is the strong association

between the high school and the Ayer Public Access Channel; the high school has a fully operational television studio with an excellent television production course. The Ayer Public Access Channel provides an instructor in television production who teaches a course at the high school to students who are interested in this field. The District has also developed a partnership with Mass Insight to enhance the Advanced Placement program at the Ayer Shirley Regional High School.

Core Values, Beliefs, and Vision of the Graduate

<u>ASRHS Core Values</u>:

Acceptive

Supportive

Respectful

Honest

Selfless

<u>ASRSD Core Beliefs</u>:

We have high expectations for all students. Every student deserves a quality education. We believe in a personalized learning environment.

Successful students are independent thinkers and doers, and persevere in finding solutions to problems. An educated child is one who has developed and evolved as a "whole child" - in the academic, social, emotional, personal and cultural domains.

Habits of reflection, setting goals, measuring one's progress support lifelong learning.

Respect for self, property, and others are essential to a healthy learning community.

Psychological and physical safety are necessary conditions for learning.

Service to others builds character, is supportive of personal growth and career development, and connects students to the real world.

Educators, students, families, and communities collaborating together results in high quality educational programming.

<u>ASRHS Vision of the Graduate</u>:

Communication

Adaptability

Time & Self Management

Self-Awareness

LEARNING CULTURE

Learning Culture

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

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

STUDENT LEARNING

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

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

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

Professional Practices

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

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

LEARNING SUPPORT

Learning Support

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

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

LEARNING RESOURCES

Learning Resources

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

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

Introduction

Introduction

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

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

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

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

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit

Accreditation coordinators and a steering committee composed of the professional staff were appointed to supervise the school's Accreditation process which includes the self-reflection, the Collaborative Conference visit, the development and implementation of a growth plan, and the Decennial Accreditation Visit. At Ayer Shirley Regional High School, a committee that included members of the faculty and the principal supervised all aspects of the Accreditation process.

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

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

The Process Used by the Visiting Team

A visiting team of six members was assigned by the Commission on Public Schools to conduct a Decennial Accreditation Visit to Ayer Shirley Regional High School in Ayer, Massachusetts. The visiting team members spent four days conducting a visit to the school; reviewed the Self-Reflection, Collaborative Conference Report, and Decennial Summary Report documents; met with School Committee members, administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students, and parents; and visited classes to determine the degree to which the school aligns with the Committee on Public Secondary Schools' and Public Elementary and Middle Schools' Standards for Accreditation and the degree to which the school is making progress toward its identified Priority

Areas for Growth as indicated in the school's Growth/Improvement Plan.

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

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

Foundational Element 1.1a - Learning Culture

Foundational Element 1.1a

Foundational Element 1.1a - The school community provides a safe environment.

The school meets Foundational Element 1.1a. The school community makes a deliberate effort to provide and maintain a safe learning environment for learners and adults. Students feel welcome, and staff and students alike show genuine care for mutual well-being. Physical safety extends to academic safety, as students, parents, and community members report that most staff members are approachable and committed to student academic, civic, and social-emotional success.

Administrators and staff alike collaborate on strategies to support education on emergency protocols and to disseminate information to staff and community on proactive measures and reactions to critical incidents, as the school community takes steps to share planning for prevention, intervention, and reaction to a variety of scenarios. To address physical safety, the procedure for Run, Hide, Fight has been practiced along with lockdowns and fire drills.

The school district has a resource officer who actively engages with the community, the administration, and the counseling staff to maintain a safe environment for students and adults. This individual divides service time between all the schools to keep the staff informed of the latest school safety information and help with any safety and security issues that may arise. In addition, staff duties include times in the parking lot to help supervise arrival and dismissal.

Additional protocols have been put in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including entry and exit procedures to classrooms, pooled testing, and other health monitoring through partnerships with community agencies.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 1.2a - Learning Culture

Foundational Element 1.2a

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

As of October 2021, the school has completed the process of creating and unveiling the vision of the graduate. The faculty and staff mapped out steps that would be taken following the Collaborative Conference to fulfill the definition of core values, beliefs about learning, and, finally, defining a vision of the graduate. A comprehensive approach enlisting the feedback of students, parents, alumni, staff, and community members all provided the school with input on the vision of the graduate. Though briefly interrupted by the pandemic and a turn to remote learning in spring 2020, the school finalized these documents. Beyond the vision of the graduate already defined, the school has plans in place to articulate the skills and competencies desired in a graduate over the next several school years.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 2.2a - Student Learning

Foundational Element 2.2a

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

As of October 2021, considerable time and effort have been spent on updating curriculum maps. In Humanities I and II, department meetings were spent creating essential questions for each course, creating essential questions for each unit within each course, working on updating material used to show a diversity of authors and characters, and re-aligning the courses to meet updated history standards and timelines. Additionally, teachers of upper-level courses in English and history redesigned the curriculum to include a wider array of voices, including the addition of a new course, Rainbows & Riots, which will debut in the second semester of this year.

While all departments used a significant percentage of their meeting time toward accomplishing this goal, future projects for the Atlas mapping of all courses will include the newly designed vision of the graduate transferable skills. These skills and the explicit instruction of these skills will now be measured by rubrics which the teachers will create. The professional staff strives for more diverse voices to be heard throughout our curriculum, not only in English and history.

While the mapping of the curriculum will never be "complete," as curricula are ever-changing, the school has demonstrated a strong commitment to seeing the curriculum as it is taught reflected in its maps and is in the planning stages of sharing Stage One of all Atlas maps with stakeholders. Next steps will include articulating specific skills and competencies, as well as assessment measures, that align with the curriculum. The professional staff believes that ensuring that all departments have updated the curriculum in the Atlas database will demonstrate additional fidelity to this Foundational Element.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 3.1a - Professional Practices

Foundational Element 3.1a

Foundational Element 3.1a - The school has a current school improvement/growth plan.

The school has a Growth/Improvement Plan that includes school-specific goals that address its Priority Areas for Growth and informs decision-making. Projected timelines for each goal take into account the time needed for effective implementation and action steps.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Elements 4.1a - Learning Support

Foundational Elements 4.1a

Foundational Element 4.1a - The school has intervention strategies designed to support students.

The school has implemented a number of substantive changes to the school counseling department, comprehensive counseling curriculum, and supports put in place to support students since the 2019 Collaborative Conference visit, at which time the school did not meet this Foundational Element.

The school counseling department has seen two positions evolve since the 2019 Collaborative Conference Visit. First, in December 2020, the school hired a director of school counseling/diversity, equity, and inclusion. This is a new position for the district and that provides direct support to counseling and intervention practices at the school. The individual in this position has helped to oversee the updating of procedures at the high school to include changes to the desire for students to be seen in the school's student information system by their preferred names and pronouns. This approach is also used in forms to include a variety of options for family dynamics. The director of school counseling/diversity, equity, and inclusion ensures vertical alignment through supervision of counseling programs at sending schools as well. A change in personnel in the counseling department has enhanced both technical and logistical practices in the school and relationships with students based on connections in co-curricular activities.

While student assistance team (STAT) meetings have become more frequent and consistent as part of the school culture, the school acknowledges that it could be more consistent with a higher degree of regularity with respect to student supports. For example, a response to the number of student failures in recent months yielded responses only out of administrative decree rather than collaborative problem-solving. However, the STAT team continues to develop ways to improve Tiers of interventions and create opportunities for direct contact between school staff, families, and students, with a lens of problem-solving and supporting students more thoroughly. The continued implementation of Panther Block has supported students in terms of both academic and social-emotional intervention, including activities of common interest between staff and students. The school is continuing to implement advisory blocks for all students in order to maintain connections between staff and students. Similarly, these blocks have relied on the vision of the graduate to normalize competencies across staff and disciplines.

School counselors have integrated a series of Tier 1 practices, including meeting with all students as part of the comprehensive counseling curriculum. Enhancing access to counselors and support staff remains somewhat inconsistent in terms of consistently providing appropriate and needed interventions for students.

The school has made significant progress toward creating systematic interventions for all students, and thus now meets this Foundational Element.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 5.1a - Learning Resources

Foundational Element 5.1a

Foundational Element 5.1a - The school site and plant support the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services.

The school meets Foundational Element 5.1a. The community and school district provide adequate school buildings and facilities that support the delivery of high-quality curriculum, programs, and services. The school building and facilities ensure a safe, secure, and healthy environment for students and adults, and the school is impeccably clean and well-maintained by the custodial staff. The physical plant meets all applicable federal and state laws and is in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. The building was renovated in 2015, and, as such, the building is well suited for learning.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Elements Ratings

Foundational Element Ratings

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

Priority Area 1

Priority Area

The school will create and adopt a vision of the graduate. This will be accomplished in a manner that includes all stakeholders: students, parents, faculty, and administration. A major goal of this process will be to begin to establish a culture of inclusion and respect.

Action, Impact, and Growth

To prepare for the 2019 Collaborative Conference Visit, the professional staff mapped out a number of steps which would need to be taken in order to meet the needs of the school community. During the 2018-2019 school year, a set of CORE values were created, with input from staff, students, families, and community members. At this planning stage, the school had also arranged for its vision of the graduate to be created the following year, 2019-2020, using a similar approach.

In the fall of 2019, four staff members from the school attended training at the NEASC office for a two-day workshop on the vision of the graduate. Following that workshop, the group created a set of Google Forms to be completed by alumni, students, and families. Concurrently, the school involved the entire faculty in identifying its desired vision of the graduate competencies and skills.

In December of 2019, the Google Form was sent to all alumni email addresses from the class of 2018; additionally, the Google Form was posted on Twitter. The school improvement plan of 2019 directed the sending the Google Form to students and families for their input before the end of the year but was subsequently interrupted by the global pandemic in March of 2020. In the summer and fall of 2021, the survey was sent to students and families to finish the outreach portion of data collection for the vision of the graduate. That information was added to the previously collected data from the staff and alumni. The vision of the graduate was completed in October 2021 and unveiled publicly in the same month.

The above-indicated action steps resulted in the development and design of a vision of the graduate, which did not previously exist. At the time of the Collaborative Conference, it was highlighted as a Priority Area for Growth as well as a Foundational Element not yet met. Because the school involved multiple stakeholders and considered the perspectives of multiple individuals in the creation of its vision of the graduate, the process was comprehensive and data-driven, as opposed to something developed without the inclusion of all stakeholders. Similarly, the action steps persisted despite interruptions beyond that school's control, particularly the school closure that occurred during the 2019-2020 school year. The development of the vision of the graduate, grounded in the School Growth/Improvement Plan, likewise connected the stakeholders to steps for school growth and imbued a sense of pragmatism and unification around a singular goal that coalesced over time. The designed vision of the graduate is something that all stakeholder groups understand and accept as a guiding principle for decision-making.

The school used a backward-design process, establishing steps that would ultimately result in the creation of a vision of the graduate. The timeline used allowed the school to maintain fidelity to the process while establishing regular checkpoints. These checkpoints served not only to validate the process with subsequent small victories but also to guide the staff in achieving the ultimate goal of this Priority Area.

The school plans to design rubrics or other assessment measures to determine and inform student growth in each of the school's core skills, as embedded in the vision of the graduate; embed competencies not only in the curriculum but also in the culture of classrooms, particularly as teachers and students partner to master the skills required to be a graduate in concert with content; work with students to further define specific language and feedback with respect to the vision of the graduate, including student understandings of the requisite skills and values; and define methods by which staff can address needs concerning instruction and assessment for student

learning, including potential time, professional development, and additional classroom materials, as connected to the vision of the graduate.

Recommended Next Steps

- Define skills and competencies aligned to the vision of the graduate
- Create a series of rubrics or other instruments that will help measure student progress toward achieving the vision of the graduate
- Embed core competencies and the vision of the graduate into curriculum maps and instructional practices
- Collaborate with students and families to ensure that there is a community-wide commitment to the vision of the graduate
- Align the skills and competencies in the vision of the graduate with the district core values, particularly as district-wide strategic planning emerges under new district leadership
- Determine a method for communicating student progress toward the achievement of the vision of the graduate
- Assess the vision of the graduate through feedback from the post-secondary community as more students leave the school with the desired skills and competencies

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- department leaders
- priority area meetings
- school leadership
- school summary report
- students

Priority Area 2

Priority Area

The school district will provide dependable funding to support a range of programs and services (The collaborative conference team did not concur with this as a Priority Area for Growth.).

Action, Impact, and Growth

The community and district governing body provide funding that is dependable, and the budget supports a wide range of programs, services, personnel, professional staff, support staff, equipment, technology, and support. The district's governing body is strategic in its planning for building the budget for this and the other district schools. Instructional materials are sufficient, as are consumable supplies, and maintenance for the building is adequate. Additionally, the current staffing is more than adequate to support the needs of the student population. As such, this Priority Area was not supported, and the school agreed during the Collaborative Conference.

Recommended Next Steps

(No recommended Next Steps.)

Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- department leaders
- school leadership
- school summary report
- teachers

Priority Area 3

Priority Area

The faculty and administration will engage in relevant professional development that supports the design of instructional practices that will meet the learning needs of all students and engage them in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills.

Action, Impact, and Growth

The principal and assistant principal recently presented to the faculty on understanding Bloom's Taxonomy, having led a discussion on both breaking down an assessment each faculty member had recently given using a Bloom's chart and comparing it to the percentages of each level of Blooms used on the previous year's MCAS, which took place on November 1, 2019.

In the fall of 2019, a series of presentations were made by the principal and assistant principal at faculty meetings, including incorporating higher order thinking (H.O.T.) questions in class and assessments on November 7, 2019. In March of 2020, the school found itself in uncharted territory with the COVID-19 pandemic, as students and staff needed to resort to remote teaching for the rest of the 2020 school year.

To begin the 2020-2021 school year, staff were given two weeks of time to prepare for the year. As the school began the work that would enable the teaching of students both remotely and in person, the professional staff continued to explore how it could define rigor, inquiry, and higher order thinking. It incorporated the Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, and Redefinition (SAMR) model into the consciousness and collaborated with the assistant superintendent on a variety of preparatory professional development sessions. On Wednesday, September 2, 2020, a presentation was made by Mr. Tom Brow of Seaside Educational Consultants on teaching in a blended learning/hybrid learning environment, with an emphasis on differentiating between rigor and amount of work. On Tuesday, September 8, 2020, Dr. Curt Bates of Seaside Educational Consultants led the staff in a multi-hour presentation on creating higher order thinking in a remote/hybrid schedule.

Concurrently, the principal and assistant principal worked individually with staff members on creating both student learning goals and professional practice goals, focusing on data tracking with an eye towards improving rigor, inquiry, and higher order thinking. These goals have been part of an ongoing cycle of evaluation, which has included multiple observations each year, data collection, and individual conversations with each faculty member.

For the 2021-2022 school year, the district refocused on creating relationships with students while exploring ways to improve some data points, using a more direct approach than in the past. The school has started the process of applying for an Early College Pathway with Mount Wachusett Community College and Framingham State University, a step taken to increase the number of students, specifically from historically underrepresented groups, represented in advanced coursework. Additionally, the school administration has emphasized Advanced Placement training for all staff in order to align the work at every level.

The action steps taken above have resulted in an increased understanding of rigor, inquiry, and higher order thinking. Teachers across disciplines have worked to craft assessments that align with the higher order questions. These questions have transitioned to deeper analysis and synthesis questions, with an emphasis on higher order thinking and writing. The questions on assessments are more aligned with questions asked on the MCAS and the Advanced Placement tests. Instead of asking generic multiple-choice questions, assessments now ask students to select multiple answers and apply their knowledge. The Massachusetts State World Language Standards were published in 2021, and the school's world language department is working toward implementing these standards across the curriculum. All disciplines have a range of assignment strategies that move from mere recall and understanding to creation, and analytical questions are used in all areas.

While the staff has developed professional practice goals in concert with higher order thinking, analysis, and inquiry, some tasks remain more rote, such as the completion of worksheets. The use of common assessments,

opportunities for staff to collaborate on inter-rater reliability, and common assessment analysis are not yet widespread. Nevertheless, throughout the school, students are afforded opportunities to analyze diverse texts, explain their thinking, create original products, and develop their own hypotheses occur.

Administrators meet with teachers to craft student learning goals and professional practice goals, with an emphasis on rigor, inquiry, and higher order thinking. These are measured in the traditional evaluation cycle which includes observations, data, and individual conversations with teachers. However, there is not yet a formal mechanism for calibration of higher order thinking in relation to instructional and assessment practices, nor is there a formalized system for common assessments across or within departments.

The school plans to combine the work with Bloom's Taxonomy with the work that needs to be conducted with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to remove the barriers to accessing content and skills; examine the schedule and consider a change, specifically a rotating schedule; develop and integrate purposeful, intentionally designed common planning time for teachers; and examine, evaluate, and revise assessment devices to ensure common assessments can norm and validate student progress.

Recommended Next Steps

- Implement higher order thinking skills in all courses evenly across the different disciplines and levels
- Use rubrics or other assessment measures to assess student growth, particularly in terms of rigor, inquiry, and higher order thinking
- Develop and implement methods by which student and faculty progress can be measured toward achieving and teaching the requisite skills embedded in the vision of the graduate
- Examine school master scheduling to ensure equitable opportunities for students and staff to help achieve the school's vision of the graduate

Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- priority area meetings
- school leadership
- teachers

Priority Area 4

Priority Area

The school will ensure that curriculum maps are articulated consistently across all areas and for all courses; are aligned both within and departments and courses within the school and with sending schools; and include the embedding of transferable skills necessary to attain the school's vision of the graduate, along with professional development to enhance the use of inquiry, higher-order thinking, and analytical skills.

Action, Impact, and Growth

The school has continued to address is the mapping of all classes, across all areas for all courses. The school expanded this Priority Area to include revising its maps to include more works by diverse authors. Each department meeting held over the past year in both English and history have included directed time for updating maps to include essential questions, skills, and content as well as beginning the discussion on how transferable skills, which are the cornerstone of the newly created vision of the graduate, can be explicitly taught and measured.

For the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, a dedicated plan was created for infusing the vision of the graduate transferable skills into each curriculum map; however, the school has had to adjust those timelines due to the need to dedicate large portions of the past year and a half to the ongoing global pandemic. The school has included in its 2021-2022 School Growth/Improvement Plan an updated approach to including these skills into the curriculum. Along with this new plan, professional development will be provided to the faculty on the benefits of explicit instruction as well as the creation and alignment of rubrics which will be used to measure growth in the transferable skills.

Both the English and social studies departments have combined their department meetings to work to diversify their curricula in order to represent a wider array of voices. Additionally, they worked to craft essential questions for each course and for each unit within each course. Many classes, including math classes, have essential questions to guide their instruction. Curriculum maps have been largely completed for most classes, while some classes still lack some elements, including essential questions.

Teachers have completed professional development on higher order thinking and embedded those skills into their curriculum maps, teaching and learning, and student assessments.

The school plans to further clarify the definition of the vision of the graduate pillars, integrate and embed the transferable skills in the vision of a graduate into course maps, create rubrics to assess progress toward this goal, and publicly share the stage one curriculum maps.

Recommended Next Steps
- Ensure that curriculum maps are articulated consistently across all areas and for all courses and aligned both within departments and courses at the high school and with the sending schools, including the embedding of transferable skills necessary to attain the school's vision of the graduate
- Provide professional development to the faculty on the benefits of explicit instruction as well as the creation and alignment of rubrics which will be used to measure growth in the transferable skills

Sources of Evidence

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

Priority Area 5

Priority Area

The school will address the academic, social, and emotional needs of students; the need for targeted interventions; and a comprehensive counseling curriculum as well as build student readiness and capacity beyond those measured by standardized and other assessments.

Action, Impact, and Growth

The school made a number of significant changes to the school counseling department, the comprehensive counseling curriculum, and the supports put in place to support students since the 2019 Collaborative Conference Visit.

The school counseling department has seen two positions evolve since the 2019 Collaborative Conference Visit. A director of school counseling/diversity, equity, and inclusion was hired in December 2020. This is a new position for the district. This new director oversees school counseling departments at each of the four schools in the district. In January of 2021, a new counselor was hired to fill a vacancy.

Student assistant team (STAT) meetings have become a larger portion of the school's efforts; however, the professional staff feels that the meetings are not yet scheduled at the level of regularity that should be conducted. The fall and winter of 2020 saw a drastic increase in the number of student failures. For the 2020-2021 school year, an administrative mandate was decreed in which a student success plan was created for each student with a failing grade, and phone calls were made to the students' families.

Panther Blocks continue to be an area of focus, during which counselors now provide and allow for the opportunity for further instruction between students and staff. In many other cases, students have found a connection to a particular staff member on the basis of common interests.This year, for the first time, students in every grade are assigned to an Advisory block.The school has created a vision of the graduate which examines both student competency in transferable skills and the explicit instruction of these skills.

Action steps taken have had a variety of impacts within the school community. The presence of a director of school counseling/diversity, equity, and inclusion now provides a lens to ensure common experiences for all students in relation to the responsibilities of the counseling department. The school has a newly developed common graduation checklist to be used with students and their families, and it is the piloting Calendly, a self-scheduling tool for students to create appointments to meet with counselors. Such changes have the potential to empower students and increase equitable access for students with their school counselors. The student information system has been updated and can now reflect such information as student preferred gender and accurate family structures. However, some students still find that access to counselors can be limited and that resources tend to focus on college planning, as opposed to other whole-child needs. This also includes the need to ensure and expand access to ELL services for students who may require and need an additional level of support within the regular education classroom.

The true impact of the revamped student assistance team (STAT) referral process is yet to be determined, as it has just recently been revised. However, there is an expectation that student referrals by teachers will increase and an intentional simplification of the referral form is a step toward this end. In addition, STAT meetings are scheduled at 7:30-7:50 a.m. in order to accommodate all members of a student's team, and parents are welcome to join via Zoom. Panther blocks have embedded social-emotional practices within the school community and provide relationship-building opportunities between students and staff. The addition of having all students assigned to advisory has provided an opportunity for counselors to push in counseling lessons, thereby adding desirable small group points of contact for students with their counselors. These lessons are primarily focused on post-secondary planning with some elements of academic achievement. The newly adopted vision of the graduate can provide focus as the faculty, staff, and administration work to increasestudent readiness and capacity beyond those measured by standardized and other assessments.

Student competency in transferable skills and the explicit instruction of these skills will be viewed through the lens of the school's rubrics and reported out to families on a regular basis.Additionally, the faculty and staff have begun to visualize how they can effectively report on students' competency levels in grade-level materials and skills.

As the school counseling department has begun to write its curriculum in alignment with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) standards, and all students are expected to receive Tier 1 services. The department tracks attendance during advisory's small group meetings at which the curriculum is currently delivered for grades 9 and 10. The school counseling department has a plan for following up with each student who was absent, ensuring 100 percent participation. There are lessons curated in the school counseling department for all grade levels dealing mostly with post-secondary planning.

The school will focus on ensuring that STAT meetings will occur as regularly as necessary to address any student who meets the targeted threshold of failure, reintroducing norms to the advisory block in order to bring a higher focus and unity of practice to these blocks, examining transferable skills through the lens of school-created rubrics that are subsequently reported out to families on a regular basis, and determining a means through which the teachers can effectively report on students' competency levels in grade-level materials and skills that do not focus on the amount of work produced but rather on the quality of the work in relation to state standards and skill levels.

Recommended Next Steps
- Provide ample opportunity for timely and immediate access to counselors, particularly for students who need support for reasons other than college planning
- Develop protocols by which team roles for support personnel such as a school counselors, adjustment counselors, ELL teachers, and other supports can be more clearly articulated and defined, particularly for all stakeholders and the population at large
- Establish, communicate, and refine for students, families, and the school community a means through which students can schedule individual meetings with counselors, for academic, social-emotional, and college and career readiness
- Incorporate the use of the graduation checklist into the culture of the school, so that all stakeholders are aware of the new tool
- Respond in a timely manner to all student inquiries, particularly when students need acute and immediate support
- Expand ELL services to ensure equitable access and intervention, based on student need

Sources of Evidence
- central office personnel

- priority area meetings
- school leadership
- school support staff
- school summary report
- students
- teachers

Part 3 - Reflection on Student Learning

Reflection on Student Learning

Teachers strategically differentiate, individualize, and personalize instructional practices based on student learning needs with some consistency. Students find that their teachers, particularly in their elective classes, provide them with the opportunity to complete projects to demonstrate learning. While project-based lessons are also used in core academic classes, it is less frequent, particularly in math classes. In an art elective course, students are given the opportunity to design their own curriculum, including the projects that they will create. Another example is in biology in which students prepare for a test later in the week. The students work in pairs to brainstorm possible topics for the test, create a list of topics, and then use teacher feedback to understand broader concepts in place of the singular details discussed in class. In other instances, however, the use of group work serves solely as a mechanism for students to observe direct instruction and follow up with worksheet completion, which is not differentiated, individualized, or personalized.

Formative assessment is used in some areas to adjust instruction in classrooms. For example, in a review activity from the IXL personalized learning platform, the teacher is able to monitor student progress on a math assignment in "live" time. The teacher is able to see how far students progress and which problems they are getting correct and which they are getting incorrect. At one point, the teacher noticed that one student was consistently getting the problems incorrect so the teacher went over to the student's desk to assist and provide feedback. Another teacher uses Kahoot! to track students' ability to solve problems and is able to see when some students are missing questions repeatedly and generates in-class responses to some of the common errors.

Group learning activities are frequently organized to support student learning. Group work is pervasive, and teachers encourage students to be creative when demonstrating their knowledge and skills. In English/humanities class, students are put in groups by the book they are reading; students in different groups were reading different books. In their groups, they work on poster paper to not only analyze their text but also to make connections to the text and to themselves, with presentations to follow. Other classes, such as calculus and statistics, include group work to self-critique mathematics solutions, while others, such as English and social studies courses, develop shared understandings of a thesis statement by which they could debate and discuss. In most cases, group work serves to support not only the academic goals but also the vision of the graduate involving communication and shared responsibility.

Teachers and support staff occasionally provide additional support and alternative instructional strategies within the regular classroom. For example, both the teacher and the support staff person circulate and help individual students and groups of students work through a variety of problems. In several core classes, particularly biology, humanities, and social studies/history, the teacher provided notes for the student in a student's native language in addition to English. Some assignments are provided in different formats, with elements of choice. The use of universal design techniques that would support a range of methods by which students could demonstrate their knowledge is limited or through which teachers present information is limited.

Teachers sometimes use organization and grouping strategies to meet the needs of each learning style in the regular classroom. In calculus, the teacher has students taking two different levels of the subject in one classroom. The teacher uses a "flipped" model in order to teach all students. The teacher uses a variety of videos to differentiate the content of the course. Classes across the curriculum, particularly humanities, IM 1-2, biology, Spanish, and technology education, use purposeful grouping strategies with a range of considerations, sometimes allowing for student choice and other times working with heterogeneous levels. A range of Tier 1 interventions are well known by the staff, but, as students require additional supports, higher Tiers of intervention tend to be more limited.

There are many structures and supports available to provide all learners with access to rigorous learning opportunities. One student explained that at Ayer-Shirley Regional High School, he has the opportunity to take Advanced Placement courses because students are not relegated to one track but could take honors or college prep leveled courses and even AP courses if they desire. The school has likewise made a shift in enrollment of

AP courses from a past model where only a limited number of students were given the opportunity to take AP courses to more inclusive opportunities of late. Another student reported that while she is not taking AP French, she is taking honors French and plans on taking the AP exam in the spring. Additionally, students have the opportunity to take dual enrollment courses for courses that are not offered in the program of studies through the Edgenuity online learning platform. For example, one student is taking Criminology through Edgenuity. As the school has integrated additional rigorous learning opportunities, "college prep" level classes more frequently rely on teacher-centered activities on the lower level of Bloom's taxonomy, where even elements of creation serve to reiterate facts with compliance.

There are some opportunities for teachers to collaborate with others regarding instructional practices designed to meet the needs of all students. In a humanities class, the English teacher and the history teacher combined the two classes for a review lesson on imperialism. Additionally, some co-teachers have common planning/PLC periods, as do some teachers from disparate disciplines. The school's purposeful development of PLC time for all teachers to plan instructional practices, however, is mostly limited.

Students sometimes have opportunities to lead their own learning. Some students who cannot fit a class into their schedules or have a deep interest in a topic are granted the opportunity to create an independent study class or enroll in Edgenuity online courses if they have an interest in a course not available directly at the school. Students wanting to challenge themselves academically are encouraged and allowed to enroll in AP classes, regardless of previous academic levels. In some classes, students work in small groups or in pairs, at their own pace, to complete assignments provided by teachers, which occurs through working on review packets, working together to answer questions based on brief scenarios, and reviewing a text as a group using the 4-square criteria. Although students could work at their own pace, many of these activities were either recall level thinking or application of skills and knowledge; some teachers also employ "extension questions" that help students with other applications of knowledge but with less frequent consistency. Project-based learning is often incorporated in elective classrooms, as students are required to create a product as part of the lesson structure as evidenced by the poster project in media classes, creation of pottery in ceramics, developing code to solve a problem in computer science, and completion of research projects in world language. Students are given opportunities to discuss in small groups or with peers, without necessarily having teacher-directed facilitation. Some use of flipped learning provides opportunities for students to learn outside of school through the use of assigned, curated videos and apply the learned knowledge during class the next day. Personalized, relevant, and authentic learning in core classes is developing, as evidenced by the balanced use of lecture-based teaching strategies and student-centered learning. Group learning opportunities during which students monitor their peers and focus their on-task practices regularly occur across disciplines and with purposeful design, even though the final product required of the group may not always be necessarily grounded in higher order analysis or creation.

Students occasionally engage in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills. Students in core classes are given some opportunities to recall prior knowledge and apply basic skills and concepts as evidenced by students being tasked to create a quiz in science based on definitions they acquired from Quizlet, reviewing definitions in history through a review game, reviewing recently read text in ELA through the use of a 4-square criterion, or engaging students through a shared activity in world language in which competition meets fluency, requiring language recall, use, and synthesis. Creativity and problem-solving is consistently employed in elective classes and occasionally some core classes. Students are given the opportunity to create works of art using the correct tools in ceramics. Students in government class apply their own research when discussing jury duty with the teacher. Computer science and robotics students are consistently given problems that require programs or designed solutions that must be tested, retested, and evaluated for success. Students in calculus class demonstrate persistence as evidenced by solving a multistep problem that requires cognitive endurance. Some activities highlight more lower-level thinking skills, as evidenced by the teacher-centered lessons focusing on filling out directed note pages, the teacher solving problems for students on the board while students passively copy, the prevalent use of worksheets in many classes, or listening to lectures in some classes. Students who are given opportunities to apply knowledge in small group activities are actively engaged in discussions of topic and employing analysis and synthesis of materials such as texts, historical documents, math problems, or scientific concepts. Additionally, examples of student work and other classroom activities showed the creation of original products, reflection or critique of student work, peer feedback loops, and the design and development of independent arguments or thesis statements.

Assessment is pervasively used to determine student learning. In multiple classes, consistent checks for understanding are occurring as teachers circulate the room during instruction. For example, in math class, a

worksheet is projected on a screen with problems and the teacher circulates to determine student understanding, giving individualized feedback and instruction.

Formative assessments are evidenced in the majority of classes. Students are told that the problems and vocabulary they are reviewing or being introduced to are on the quiz that week which provides clear expectations. In math, the teacher asks students individually to answer questions on the problems on the screen; and the teacher circulates with a whiteboard when students are problem-solving on their own after instruction. In multiple classes, particularly those observed in Spanish, humanities, IM 1-2-3, and academic support, students work in small groups with the academic instructor, co-teacher, or support staff circulating, which allows for formative assessment as well as regular and consistent checking for understanding.

A range of assessment strategies is used, often varying by subject. In Humanities, groups of students read synopses and watch available clips of books made into movies when choosing a book for a four-week project. The project is broken down into four segments which provide formative assessments during the project. Students collaboratively design a poster by providing three examples of literary devices, three quotes that "jump out at them," favorite and least favorite characters, and a prediction about something significant they expected in the upcoming pages. The teachers from both history and English (humanities teachers) circulate between both rooms and the group working in the hallway to determine students' understanding and to provide specific and measurable criteria for success on the project. In Spanish classes, students are in teams competing against each other on a vocabulary quest, working in teams to describe a person in a picture, and then working on a Quizlet.

Specific and measurable criteria for success are consistently given to students prior to assessments. In the majority of classes, study guides are given to students prior to assessments. In some classes, such as biology, humanities, calculus, IM 1-2, and all Advanced Placement courses, unit plans, along with study guides and practice quizzes, are shared with students at the beginning of the year so students have access to necessary study materials, as well as the ability to look ahead, ensuring that another time management skill is introduced. Rubrics are sometimes given so students can be aware of expectations before starting an assignment, but criteria for feedback in advance of assignments are inconsistently implemented.

The work assigned in classes clearly aims to incorporate the vision of the graduate in terms of communication and time management. Teachers consistently ask students for explanations as evidenced in math and humanities classes, and the math department has worked to broaden questions to include specific steps in a process, instead of the only resulting answer, to not only construct but also analyze two graphs and describe how to collect random samples. New 2021 standards in world languages have supported higher order thinking by asking for justification and arguments of situations instead of simple descriptions.

Time management is practiced starting in freshman year and is consistently supported by teachers. If a student has multiple projects due in a short span of time, teachers are willing to change due dates to allow students the opportunity to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the topic. Every learner's thinking about a concept, skill, or information being learned is frequently checked for understanding because teachers consistently check for information and discuss it in a group setting.

Common assessments are found in the math courses in which students who take the same course on either A or B day have the same assessment. However, common assessments across all disciplines are in development or limited in scope.

Across disciplines, learners have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning, sometimes receive corrective feedback, and use this feedback in meaningful ways to support their learning. Teachers frequently provide choice and different ways to demonstrate learning, with criteria for success likewise identified by which students can demonstrate both content mastery and skill-based success. In several disciplines, opportunities to demonstrate learning occur, such as working in the classroom to evaluate problems and questions while the teacher provides feedback both by circulating among the students individually and with small groups of students collaborating. Classes that operate with a flipped classroom model allow students' lower-level remembering and understanding to be practiced on their own before class, thereby engaging in higher levels of learning in class with peers and the teacher. Teachers regularly circulate actively in classes, interacting with each student, to assess understanding, increase student-teacher interaction, and provide corrective feedback. In Spanish class, students work collaboratively in small, changing groups to compete in small vocabulary games with the teacher providing verbal clues. When the activity is finished, a smooth segue prompts students to put away their

Chromebooks and start working individually on a packet with the teacher discussing the packet from the front of the classroom.

Teacher feedback is sometimes given at the time of the return of an assessment. Students are also given the opportunity to get feedback from teachers during Panther block every other day. Teachers are consistently approachable for feedback whether in class or during Panther Block. Students find that feedback is provided on content and skills, such as when the content of a presentation is evaluated, as well as feedback provided on the way the presentation was delivered.

In the Community Awareness course, the curriculum is firmly in place to instruct students to be able to provide their own meals by the end of the course. By design, the class instructs junior and senior students to initially pick their recipes then cook them in class. By the end of their senior year, they will develop a menu for a whole meal, cook it, and serve it to a group. As students work through this process, they are given consistent and specific corrective feedback such as how big to make a meatball knowing they have a short time to bake them before class is finished.

Learners consistently use technology across all curricular areas to support, enhance, and demonstrate learning. All students in the high school have a Chromebook as part of the school's 1:1 device program. Throughout the past year and a half, the professional staff has used Google Classroom as a home base for all instructional needs, and the students have used technology in all aspects of all classes. Technology is often deliberately used to personalize the pace of learning. In a science class, a majority of students complete a Google Form based on a review of notes, while another works independently on a prerequisite assignment in Google Classroom and two others independently move on to prepare online for an upcoming lab. Purposeful differentiation is in place as witnessed in a computer class in which the teacher and two students work with four screens used to help teach, practice, and personalize instruction, and, in a math class, a teacher curates videos to supplement student learning. The pervasive use of digital collaboration by learners to support their learning is also firmly in place. Students actively use technology to contribute to shared documents such as study guides or student projects, as well as to present their work to their classes, such as wellness projects, literary analysis, or other ideas that extend classwork beyond teacher-student interaction. In so doing, students employ a variety of Google Suite applications, including Google Slides, Google Docs, and Google Sheets, to help present and articulate ideas, solve problems, collaborate, and provide each other meaningful feedback, while using other software programs more specific to particular disciplines to meet curricular goals, particularly in art and engineering electives. The frequent opportunity to communicate clearly and creatively is also afforded in an art class in which students create five kinds of logos and in an English class in which students can write and share a children's book.

Part 4 - Capacity for Continuous Growth as a Learning Organization

Conceptual Understanding

The faculty and administration share an understanding of what effective learning looks like, and this understanding is embedded in the school's core values about learning and vision of the graduate. As a result of the recent completion of the vision of the graduate in October 2021, there is an emerging understanding of effective learning, Priority Areas, and the vision of the graduate. Additionally, the previously developed core values have positively impacted learning at the school. The school's core values of "Acceptive, Supportive, Respectful, Honest, and Selfless" incorporate a commitment to High Expectations, Inclusive and Personalized Learning, Fostering Critical Thinking, Engaging Students to Find Solutions, and Collaboration Among Students. These Core Values are evident in classrooms and among students. The newly completed vision of the graduate includes the concepts of Communication, Adaptability, Time and Self Management, and Self Awareness.

To promote an understanding of the vision of the graduate, surveys were sent to alumni, students, and families, and additional input was obtained from staff. The school's goal is to embed the vision of the graduate in all curriculum maps. Curriculum mapping is still a work in progress that was significantly delayed due to the consequences of the pandemic. However, the professional staff has a shared understanding of higher order thinking grounded in past professional learning, much of which is already embedded in the existing curriculum.

Commitment

The school demonstrates a strong commitment to its vision of the graduate and the Standards for Accreditation, as evidenced through teachers' individual student learning goals which link educator evaluations to data that illustrates students' growth in an identified area. In addition to academic monitoring, the social, emotional, personal, and cultural core beliefs are strengthened through Panther blocks, advisory, and extensive co-curricular programs. The advisory program provides students with the skills to be successful, and the Panther block provides an outlet for different activities of student interest during the school day.

Data analysis is used to analyze standardized testing as well as MCAS and AP scores to detect areas of weakness and to remedy these areas through changes in the methods of instruction and potential course development.

The school's commitment to quality education for all students was challenged by the pandemic and remote learning which resulted in an increase in student failures. A student success plan was individually developed for students with failing grades with calls placed to parents. To improve this process, a more streamlined referral form has been developed and contact between staff members and families has been initiated as a point of emphasis for the 2021-2022 school year. The district commitment and resultant shifts to school counseling have resulted in a renewed commitment to myriad supports for all students.

Several community resources enhance learning opportunities. These include a college-level course taught by faculty members at Mt. Wachusett Community College and other local universities, the presence of a school resource officer in the building, and student participation in the Public Access channel. The school has a partnership with Mass Insight to enhance the Advanced Placement program.

Competency

The administrative team and the faculty are committed to assisting students in attaining their goals and clearly

understand the necessary steps to achieve and implement the vision of the graduate, which will promote an effective learning environment. The school has supports in place to achieve continued progress to ensure that its identified priorities are reflected in the school culture. The school's professional development supports the design of instructional priorities that will meet learning goals and engage students in multiple areas. These include problem-solving and higher order thinking skills through questioning, analysis, inquiry, and understanding impacts. The professional development program has focused on social-emotional learning, which will require additional remediation to ensure a consistent understanding of comprehensive school counseling services among all stakeholders, including students, parents, and staff. The school teams with area school districts in order to provide additional professional development opportunities with an emphasis on small group instruction and higher order thinking skills. Faculty members have been added to assist in counseling for students on an IEP. Curriculum maps continue to be developed that align with the newly developed vision of the graduate, and, in many departments, the creation of essential questions for each course will allow the curriculum to evolve into sustained positive student progress.

Capacity

The school has the time, resources, and support needed to make progress on its identified priorities. The professional staff is fully invested in the school's four Priority Areas for Growth. The school is committed to continuous improvement in culture and climate. The district provides sufficient funding for staffing and resources in all major areas, which is more than adequate to support the needs of the school. Common planning time within the school day is not generally available and would add to the capacity of the teachers to provide higher quality instruction. The district budget funds infrastructure, technology, supplies, maintenance, and a wide range of programs integral to the school's ability to successfully realize growth and progress. All classroom needs are met on a regular basis, and the professional staff is fully committed to the advisory and Panther blocks. The school committee is fully supportive of the high school and has high praise for the teaching staff and administrative team. The school has made programmatic changes that have enhanced instructional practices, intervention strategies, and student support services. As the vision of the graduate is fully implemented in all curriculum documents, the capacity of the school to meet the four indicators of its vision will be achieved.

Additional Information

Additional Information

Standard 1 Principle 2

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the School: See Priority Area #1 (the school has developed a vision of the graduate).

Standard 1 Principle 6

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the school: A clear line of protocols has been developed and the organizational structure of the district has clarified any misperceptions from the Collaborative Conference.

Standard 2 Principle 2

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the school: See Priority Area #4.

Standard 2 Principle 3

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the school: See Priority Area #3.

Standard 2 Principle 4

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the school: See Priority Areas #3 and 4.

Standard 2 Principle 5

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the school: See Priority Areas #3 and 4.

Standard 2 Principle 8

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the school: See Priority Areas #3 and 4.

Standard 2 Principle 9

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the school: At this point, all students in the high school have a 1:1 Chromebook. Throughout the past year and a half, the staff has used Google Classroom as a home base for all instructional needs and the students have used technology in all aspects of all classes.

Standard 3 Principle 1

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the school: See Priority Area #1.

Standard 3 Principle 3

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the school: See Priority Area #3 and 4.

Commendations

Commendation

The awareness of the faculty and administration of the professional responsibility to provide social-emotional learning opportunities to all students

Commendation

The pervasively respectful, positive, candid, and empathetic culture of the school

Commendation

The unified approach of most teachers to embrace the need for ongoing curriculum mapping and development of higher order instructional practices to drive inquiry and problem-solving

Commendation

The unified perspective of most faculty members toward the value of the process of defining the vision of the graduate and using it to drive school improvement measures

Commendation

The introduction of Calendly online scheduling software to empower students to schedule meetings with their counselors

Commendation

The professional culture and commitment to a sense of shared achievement, ownership, and responsibility; the definition of that commitment through the lens of the vision of the graduate; and development of curriculum maps

Commendation

The variety and depth of professional development to improve and promote rigor, inquiry, and higher order thinking; the introduction of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a tool for classroom practice;and the school's subsequent commitment in most areas toward the implementation of these practices

Commendation

The hiring of a director to provide opportunities for equitable student access and consistency throughout the school counseling department and the subsequent adjustment to the student information system to reflect more equitable practices regarding gender identity and family structures

Commendation

The unified perspective of most teachers toward the value of implementing rigor, inquiry, and higher order thinking and variety of professional development opportunities to support those ends

Commendation

Additional Recommendations

Recommendation

Use the school's forthcoming equity audit to drive additional enhancements and revisions to professional practices, school-wide expectations, and curricular materials

Recommendation

Create, implement, and share individual teacher professional practice and student learning goals connecting educator professional development to school improvement goals and enhancements to a consistent vision of the graduate among all stakeholders

Recommendation

Utilize the forthcoming schedule study to help drive improved equity in terms of student opportunities and professional collaboration, specifically to implement formal common planning time

Recommendation

Expand and systematize the creation of student success plans and formal interventions for students failing classes, including continued revision and enhancement to STAT and MTSS processes and student access to appropriate counseling supports

Recommendation

Support all teachers in the implementation of Universal Design principles to ensure more consistent integration of differentiated and personalized learning in all curricular areas

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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

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

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

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

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES
Commission on Public Schools

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

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

Roster of Team Members

Chair(s)

Chair: Mr. Michael Rubin - Uxbridge High School

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

Team Members

Michael Csorba - Acton-Boxborough Regional High School

Karen Merrill-Antle - John Stark Regional High School

Sharon Pfenninger - Groton-Dunstable Regional High School

Donna Zannelli - Southbridge High School