

**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND  
COLLEGES  
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**



***REPORT OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE***

**Wachusett Regional High School**

**Holden, Massachusetts**

**March 9 - 12, 2014**

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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 Wachusett Regional 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 Wachusett Regional 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 Committee on Technical and Career Institutions (CTCI), the Committee 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 shows 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 Wachusett Regional High School, a committee of twelve members, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned all teachers in the school to appropriate subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities, and facilities available for young people.

The self-study of Wachusett Regional High School extended over a period of seventeen school months from May 2012 to January 2014. Teachers and school administrators participated in the self-study to share in the development of core values and beliefs about learning at Wachusett Regional High School.

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, Wachusett Regional 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**

The Committee on Public Secondary Schools assigned a visiting committee of seventeen evaluators to evaluate Wachusett Regional High School. The Committee members spent four days in Holden, Massachusetts, 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 and central office administrators, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Wachusett Regional High School.

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 26 hours shadowing 17 students for a half day
- a total of 22 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 34 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 Wachusett Regional High School.

## SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY SUMMARY

Wachusett Regional High School, located in Holden, Massachusetts, provides educational opportunities to students at the secondary level from the communities of Holden, Paxton, Princeton, Rutland, and Sterling. These five towns located in the central part of the state, outside Worcester, are comprised of predominantly white, middle-class to upper middle-class families.

The populations of the five Wachusett towns hail from vary greatly in size but not in terms of demographics. According to the 2013 Landmark Town Guide the population of the five member towns is Holden (18,487), Rutland (8,657), Sterling (7,488), Paxton (4,806), and Princeton (3,534). More than 95 percent of the residents of the district identified as being white, and not one of the towns contained a minority group making up more than 1.5 percent of their populations.

In terms of socioeconomic status, families in the Wachusett Regional School District are predominantly middle to upper middle class. As of 2010, the median household income of the five towns was \$69,472 while the median family income was \$77, 208. While most of the people who live in these five towns fall at least in the middle class, the district is not free from poverty. Census data reveals that between 1.8 percent to 4.4 percent of the population lives below the poverty line; and between 2.1 percent to 5.7 percent of that population are children under the age of 18. The largest concentrations of poverty are found in Rutland.

Wachusett Regional High School is one of 12 schools in the Wachusett Regional School District. In addition to the high school, there are six elementary schools, three middle schools, and two combination elementary/middle schools. Davis Hill Elementary School (population 506), Mayo Elementary (499), Dawson Elementary (468), and Mountview Middle School (735) are located in Holden. Naquin Elementary School (350), Glenwood Elementary School (412), and Central Tree Middle School (407) are located in Rutland. Houghton Elementary School (461) and Chocksett Middle School (406) are located in Sterling. Thomas Prince School (372) is located in Princeton and serves grades K-8. Paxton Center School (553) also serves grades K-8.

Financial support for Wachusett Regional High School falls short of the support accorded other public high schools in Massachusetts. In each of the fiscal years 2010, 2011, and 2012, the average per pupil expenditures at Wachusett Regional High School

was lower than the state average. In 2010, the average Massachusetts high school allocated \$13,055 per student, while Wachusett allocated \$9,963 per student. In 2011, the average student expenditure of Massachusetts schools was \$13,361 per pupil, while the Wachusett Regional School District student expenditure average was \$10,170 per pupil. In 2012, the Wachusett Regional School District spent \$10,817 while the state average was \$13,636. This ranked WRHS 310 of 326 school districts in the state for per pupil student expenditures.

Approximately 2,100 students attend Wachusett Regional High School. Wachusett's enrollment includes approximately 66 school-choice students from surrounding towns. The 9th grade contains 511 students, the 10th grade 568, the 11th grade 520, and the 12th grade 492; WRHS also has nine post-graduates in its Life Skills Program. Females make up 50.5 percent of the school's population with males making up 49.5 percent. The average attendance rate for Wachusett Regional High School is 95.9 percent.

There are currently 134.4 teachers employed at Wachusett Regional High School making the student-to-teacher ratio 15.8:1. Teachers are responsible for teaching during five periods of a seven-period rotating schedule, in which one class is dropped each day. The mean class size for teachers at WRHS is 20.3 students, and the median class size is 22 students. This average is inclusive of special education and life skills classrooms, where one-on-one instruction may occur.

Students at Wachusett Regional High School perform well on national and state standardized tests. On the most recent series of MCAS tests administered during the spring of 2013, a greater percentage of Wachusett students scored proficient or higher when compared to the state average. On the ELA MCAS, 96 percent of Wachusett sophomores scored proficient or higher as compared to a state average of 92 percent. On the Math MCAS, 91 percent of students scored proficient or higher as compared to the state average of 80 percent. On the Science and Technology MCAS tests, 83 percent of students received scores of proficient or higher while the state average was around 72 percent. According to the MA DESE website the SATs administered in the 2012-2013 school year showed that the average score of Wachusett students on the SAT Reading Test was a 537 (state average was 507). The average Wachusett student score on the SAT Math Test was 553 (state average was 522). The average score for Wachusett students on the SAT Writing Test was a 527 (state average was 501).

To date, 245 students enrolled at Wachusett Regional High School have Individualized Education Plans, and 160 students are receiving accommodations under section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Twenty-eight aides support the special education population at Wachusett Regional High School.

Wachusett Regional High School's proximity to both Worcester and Boston mean a wide variety of both two- and four-year institutions of higher learning are available for graduating seniors from Wachusett to attend. Most of the students from Wachusett Regional who enroll in two-year programs after graduation attend either Quinsigamond Community College in Worcester or Mount Wachusett Community College in Gardner, MA. Graduates who have opted to enroll in four-year programs often attend schools such as Worcester State University, College of the Holy Cross, Assumption College, and the University of Massachusetts. Students from Wachusett have also gone on to attend many reputable public and private institutions throughout the country including, but not limited to, Amherst College, Boston College, Brown University, and Worcester Polytechnic Institute. According to the 2012 WRHS Profile, 93 percent of students graduating from Wachusett went on to attend college. Of that number, 72 percent attended four-year institutions and 21 percent attended two-year institutions.

## **Wachusett Regional High School's Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations**

"Wachusett Regional High School is committed to an educational process that fosters independence and responsibility in our students. By offering diverse, challenging, academic programs and rich co-curricular activities, WRHS strives to provide students with the skills and knowledge to achieve their potential as life-long learners."

We work toward achieving this mission by promoting our core values of

- Citizenship and Responsibility
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Creativity and Innovation

### ***WRHS 21st-Century Learning Expectations***

While mastering individual course content, it is expected WRHS students will:

- exercise responsible citizenship
- communicate effectively in written forms
- communicate effectively in spoken forms
- think critically and solve problems
- think creatively
- collaborate and learn actively
- use technology effectively

**COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**  
**STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION**

**TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS**

*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*

## 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.

## Conclusions

Wachusett Regional High School is working toward engaging 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. During the summer of 2008, a committee formed to create a set of core values that echoed the school's mission statement and the necessary implementation of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations

At the start of the process, WRHS administration did a comparative study with other local high schools to open discussions, which occurred during faculty meetings, administrative dialogues, collegial conversations, and department meetings in the 2010-2011 school year. Once the core values had been reduced to six principles, these values were given to staff for evaluation and to parent advisory committees for deliberation. After these meetings, the list was further refined to five core values, which changed in its entirety in 2012. These new core values appear in few locations around the administrative and academic hallways, as well as in the school cafeteria. These five core values are Critical Thinking/Problem Solving, Creativity/Innovation, Citizenship/Responsibility, Communication, and Collaboration. These values appear in academic classrooms, but the way they were presented were not consistent across those classrooms visited. These core values also appear occasionally on teacher syllabi, on the school's website, in student and faculty handbooks, and are a major component in the freshman seminar class.

In 2013, as a means to disseminate these new core values to the student population, the homeroom advisories conducted a poster competition during which students discussed the core values and created posters offering their interpretation of these values. These posters were meant to hang in the school hallways and around the school; however, these are rarely seen in classrooms and hallways other than a dedicated bulletin board outside the freshman/sophomore administrative offices. Eighty-five percent of students is familiar with the school's core values and beliefs, but students interviewed could not cite any of the values or claim to know what most of them were. Eighty-seven percent of parents also says they are familiar with the core values and beliefs, and parents report that their children are living them. Faculty and staff echo this belief that their students are living these values and beliefs in their classrooms. Seventy-three percent of staff members is clear as to the school's core values. With continual meetings, revisions, and input from all stakeholders to the

development of the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations, the WRHS community will implement a core set of beliefs and values that are widely known and recognized throughout the school community and will act as a clear guideline for academic, social, and behavioral expectations at the school. (self-study, facility tour, students, teachers, parents, teacher syllabi, Endicott survey)

Wachusett Regional High 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 are working toward identifying and targeting high levels of achievement. The school's learning expectations pose challenging and measurable standards for the student body with the aim of promoting well-adjusted, fully prepared young adults to higher education and meaningful career paths. Students have many opportunities to rise to the challenge of these learning expectations through varied co-curricular activities and events and community service programs. To varying degrees, students have some opportunities to practice and demonstrate proficiency with each of the school-wide learning expectations in their classes. Learning expectations are not posted in all classrooms, but often instruction reflects aspects of these skills. These school-wide rubrics and the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations are available on the main page of the school's website.

While the school-wide rubrics aim to define the school's learning expectations, the language is largely inconsistent. Students cite that they receive these rubrics in their classes as part of assessment, but they feel that some of the language is confusing. Faculty and staff have not had many opportunities to meet formally in professional development situations to discuss the implementation of these rubrics in their classrooms and cite this as one of the main issues with their ability to meet this standard effectively. Faculty and staff also note that the phrasing of the rubrics is vague and makes application of them in their assessments difficult. The world languages department has made great strides in implementing the school-wide rubrics within its instruction. Other faculty members have utilized portions of the school-wide rubrics to create their own rubrics to be used in their assessment of student work. Administrators indicate that they struggle with the reporting out of the data from these rubrics and will be working with staff members to find an effective method to do so. When educators and administration have the opportunity to learn how to implement school-wide rubrics as well as the chance to review and revise them, the school community will have 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations that are defined by school-wide analytic rubrics that

identify targeted high levels of achievement. (self-study, school website, teachers, students, classroom observations, school-wide rubrics, school leadership team)

Wachusett Regional High School's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations are adequately reflected in the culture of the school, and the school community is working toward utilizing these values, beliefs, and expectations to drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom, as well as to guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations. Faculty members, parents, students, and administrators appear to agree that one of the greatest qualities about WRHS is the school culture. There are a wide variety of opportunities for student citizenship success such as in-house scholarships, community service, the Wachusett Partnership program, the Best Buddies program, and the Life Skills program. Students are able to employ critical thinking skills and innovative skills with the development of the school's community garden, membership in the robotics club, and participation in the school's art exhibitions. The creation of the Wachusett Closet, a space for students with need to find proper clothing, hats, and coats and the Mountaineer Volunteers organization show a dedication to civic responsibility within the school. Students are utilizing technology within their classrooms and the school, however, the technology is dated and bordering on obsolete as most of the technological equipment was purchased with the school renovations in 2009. Despite the lack of up-to-date technology, educators employ the use of *Google* products to allow students to collaborate more effectively in their creation of group work.

While the core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations are not posted prominently in every classroom, 73 percent of faculty reports considering them while making teaching decisions, such as lesson planning and instruction. A number of faculty including members of the world languages and math departments claim that they definitely consider these values when planning curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Some of these core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> learning expectations were occasionally apparent in examples of student work, while others such as collaboration, effective use of technology, and creativity were more prevalent. Not all departments are using school-wide rubrics as written and common assessments appear to only be used for the midterm and final exams. While faculty members do not seem entirely cognizant that they are utilizing these values, beliefs, and expectations in most classrooms, it is evident that it is happening naturally.

Sixty-three percent of staff believes that the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations are guiding decisions related to policies, procedures, and the allocation of resources. Since the adoption of the five core values in 2012, the department curriculum maps have been updated to include both core values and the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations in their lesson plans. Within the student handbook, disciplinary procedures follow aspects of the core values and civic/social learning expectations to ensure proper student conduct and behavior. Technology policies have been modified to include social media and cell phone usage. Fully embracing and embedding the school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations in all curricular areas and making them the driving force of all policy, procedures, and decision-making will optimize opportunities for all students to have equitable exposure and to achieve proficiency with the academic, civic, and social competencies. (self-study, teachers, parents, students, Endicott survey, school leadership team)

Wachusett Regional High School does not regularly review and revise its core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, as well as on district and school community priorities because the school recently adopted these values, beliefs, and expectations within the last two years. In an attempt to integrate the core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, faculty and staff members have begun listing the values on their syllabi and class websites. Student homerooms utilized a poster contest to become more acquainted with the core values, however, there is little to no evidence of these posters still being displayed in the hallways.

Starting in October 2012, the department heads are using planning time to formulate school-wide rubrics that reflect the school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. These rubrics were completed in 2013 and have been minimally implemented in instruction and assessment as they were intended. Faculty and staff members have taken sections of the rubrics and have created their own rubric to guide instruction and assessment, leading to inconsistencies across departments.

Faculty and administrators state that they have not had sufficient professional development time to adequately implement the use of the school-wide rubrics as a driving force for curriculum planning, instruction, and assessment. In addition, the administrative team has yet to develop a plan for review and revisions of the school-wide rubrics to better reflect the core values and beliefs of the school community across curricula. Eighty percent of parents is familiar with the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning

expectations and 88 percent says they are familiar with the core values and beliefs at the school. This is no evidence, however, that there has been a forum during which these values, beliefs, and expectations have been discussed and reviewed with the parents and school community. While there are meeting minutes and agendas showing that faculty, administration, and the school improvement committee met from 2011 – 2013 to discuss rubrics and core values, there is no evidence that any revision of the rubrics occurred.

Since they have not had time to learn how to adequately implement these rubrics, faculty members have not been able to sufficiently gather, examine, or report out the data regarding student achievement of the use of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. On the other hand, the gathering, examination, and reporting of standardized test data has driven curriculum and instruction across departments. At this time, student work is neither regularly reviewed to target school-wide learning priorities, nor is it evident that school data is sufficiently used to examine student achievement gaps and how to resolve those disparities. District middle and elementary school principals also indicate that they had their own values, beliefs, and expectations and are unsure how they are aligned with the high school, thus creating a lack of cohesion between the district and the high school. When Wachusett Regional High School develops and implements a plan for regularly reviewing and revising its core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, and district/school community priorities, the positive culture that characterizes the school will continue to thrive and reflect the needs and priorities of the school. (self-study, teachers, students, core values and beliefs subcommittee, district principals, parents, school leadership team)

## **Commendations**

1. The use of core values and beliefs in freshman seminar classes
2. The school has clear, challenging, and measurable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
3. The posting and accessibility of the learning expectations and rubrics on the school's main website
4. The faculty, staff, and students that comprise the positive and affirming culture at WRHS
5. The wide variety of co-curricular activities, course offerings, community service opportunities, and alternative education programs
6. The natural inclusion of the core values and beliefs in classroom instruction and school life

## **Recommendations**

1. Develop and implement a unified presentation of the core values that can be prominently displayed in classrooms and other areas
2. Develop and implement a practice by which the school's new core values and beliefs about teaching and learning as well as the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations are regularly reviewed and revised by all stakeholders including students
3. Develop and implement a plan to ensure that the core values, beliefs about learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom
4. Ensure that students, parents, and the public are knowledgeable about the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations
5. Utilize data collected on student achievement from the school-wide rubrics to inform curriculum, instruction, and assessment

## Teaching and Learning Standard

# 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

The curriculum at Wachusett Regional High School (WRHS) demonstrates some evidence of purposeful design intended to ensure that all students are provided with numerous opportunities to practice and achieve each of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. In 2011, faculty and staff members identified seven 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations developed from the core values adopted in 2009. Since then, faculty and staff members have been working to incorporate these expectations into their classrooms. Posters and papers documenting the school's learning expectations are observable in some classrooms and in some common areas and hallways. This information also appears on curriculum documents and on the school's website.

Sixty-seven percent of staff members reports that the school's formal curriculum design ensures that all students practice and achieve these learning expectations. Although 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations are included in curriculum documents, the determination of who will assume responsibility for each of these learning expectations is not clearly specified. The curriculum guides do not uniformly articulate the connections between course content and the learning expectations. Many student work samples, however, reflect that the school's learning expectations are often practiced in multiple courses and across multiple levels.

WRHS lacks a formal, school-wide process for reviewing data regarding the school's learning expectations and curriculum development. Part of the process for implementing these expectations has been the creation of school-wide rubrics; a separate rubric exists for each of the six learning expectations. Use of these rubrics for assessing student progress or for data collection to inform curriculum decisions is not evident. School leadership acknowledges that the implementation of these rubrics is in its earliest stages. While the school has developed 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, the curricula have not yet been fully revised to implement the new expectations, limiting the opportunities students have to practice and master the new learning expectations. (Endicott survey, classroom observations, school website, student handbook, curriculum guides, teachers, school leadership team)

Wachusett Regional High School's curriculum is not consistently written in a common format. Fifty-one percent of teachers agrees that a shared, school-wide template for curriculum mapping does not currently exist; however, each department's documents generally include detailed units of study, essential questions, concepts, content, and skills. While the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations are referenced

in the vast majority of these documents, specific instructional practices for meeting these standards are generally not in evidence. Some departments, such as world languages and science, are comprehensive in their inclusion of instructional strategies and assessment practices, but other departments include these components inconsistently. Explicitly identified common assessments and the specific school-wide rubrics used in the scoring of these assessments are absent from most documents. Many singleton courses and electives do not yet have curriculum maps in place. Department heads recognize that this work is by nature an ongoing process and cite the lack of common planning and dedicated department time as a challenge in making progress in recent years. When a common template is used consistently among all departments for the purpose of curriculum formatting, students and teachers are provided with a clear understanding of how the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations will be achieved. (Endicott survey, curriculum guides, self-study, teachers, department heads)

The WRHS curriculum frequently encourages students to pursue a depth of understanding and application of knowledge through inquiry and problem-solving, higher order thinking, cross-disciplinary learning, authentic learning opportunities in and out of school, and informed and ethical use of technology. Eighty-five percent of parents, 86 percent of students and 91 percent of staff members agree that the curriculum at WRHS emphasizes depth of understanding and higher order thinking. This emphasis on depth of knowledge is apparent in curriculum documents and in many student work samples. Using *Bloom's Digital Taxonomy of Learning Domains* as a framework, the visiting committee noted 67.5 percent of instructional methodologies employed reflect higher order thinking and depth of understanding. Classroom observations also indicate that many students are provided with opportunities for practicing inquiry and problem-solving. This type of teaching and learning is not always consistent among and between departments, classes, or levels. For example, one CP history class fostered student engagement by using a jig-saw activity, incorporating primary sources, and supporting students to make modern-day connections to the content. In another classroom, however, the teacher engaged in traditional questioning, page-by-page bookwork, and lecturing.

WRHS acknowledges that cross-disciplinary learning is a weakness in its curriculum. Only 58 percent of students and 57 percent of staff believe that the school places an emphasis on this type of learning opportunities. Curriculum documents do not illustrate connections made from one content area to another. Teachers and

students are unable to provide examples of when and where this takes place at the school. Conversations with staff members indicate that departments and teachers are interested in cross-curricular collaboration, but scheduling constraints, lack of common planning time, and the absence of models of viable cross-content teamwork are barriers to this work happening with any consistency.

WRHS's ability to deliver authentic learning opportunities is viewed very differently by students and staff. Eighty-seven percent of teachers indicates that the curriculum emphasizes authentic application of knowledge and skills. Only 52.5 percent of students feels that what they learn in classes is applicable to other courses and to life outside of the school. Across multiple disciplines and levels, ranging from special education (SPED) to college preparatory (CP) to Advanced Placement (AP), there is evidence that students are provided with opportunities for authentic learning. Programs in music, art, world languages, science, and journalism also provide students with opportunities for authentic learning. WRHS's partnership programs prepare a limited number of students for careers in automotives and technology, business marketing and accounting, criminal justice, early childhood education, fashion and textiles, graphics communications, health and sciences, restaurant management and technology/engineering. A number of co-curricular clubs and organizations, such as Model UN, DECA and the student newspaper, also allows students to apply knowledge and skills they gain in their classes to real world scenarios.

Seventy-three percent of staff agrees that the curriculum at WRHS promotes the effective and ethical use of technology in classrooms. Many teachers report that they address responsible use of technology as part of their instruction related to research. The library/media specialist meets with every freshman student to explicitly teach about the ethical use of technology. The freshman seminar curriculum, the student handbook and the school's online writing resources also clearly address the appropriate use of technology. When there are consistent and widespread opportunities for students to apply inquiry, problem-solving and higher order thinking skills, to experience cross-curricular and authentic learning opportunities, and to demonstrate the informed and ethical use of technology, students will be able to demonstrate a depth of understanding and application of knowledge that will assist them in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (Endicott survey, self-study, classroom observations, student work, curriculum guides, teachers, school website)

The written and taught curricula at WRHS are predominantly aligned. Eighty percent of staff members reports that this is the case. The school's extensive use of common midterm and final exams helps to ensure this alignment. Many departments analyze data collected from common assessments to measure student progress toward mastery of the skills and concepts identified in the curriculum guides. The math, English, and science departments also engage in MCAS item analysis and adjust the instruction according to strengths and weaknesses disclosed by that data. Across the school, some teachers post learning objectives and essential questions taken directly from the written curriculum, but classroom visits reveal this to be an inconsistent practice. While there is no formal allocation of time for collaboration, many teachers collaborate regularly on their own time and informally share curriculum resources in support of the written curriculum. Some students report a disparity in curricular demands and expectations between staff members teaching the same course. Frequent visits by department heads and assistant principals help to ensure that teachers are addressing common concepts and skills and using common curriculum materials within the same courses. When there is alignment between the school's written and taught curricula, students are assured equitable opportunities for practicing and mastering WRHS's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (Endicott survey, self-study, classroom observations, department heads, evaluation logs, students)

While effective curricular coordination is evident within departments, it does not yet occur with the sending schools in the district. Department heads coordinate curriculum development within departments. Although 79 percent of staff reports they are involved in curriculum evaluation, review, and revision work, 43 percent believes they have insufficient time to be formally engaged in the process. Some departments are further along in this process than are others. The science and world languages departments have organized vertical maps that align their curriculum. Other departments recognize the importance of the documents to drive equitable instruction, but have not completed the work, citing a lack of time and resources to commit to the process. As a result, gaps in curriculum alignment allow for inequitable student access to the curriculum and unequal opportunities for learning.

While all department heads express a desire for vertical curriculum alignment, there is currently no formal communication regarding curriculum articulation between the district's sending schools and the high school. WRHS is not represented at the K through 8 curriculum meetings and information about curriculum decisions is not shared between the two levels. However, there are informal efforts by some

department heads to establish vertical curriculum efforts. For example, the math and world languages curriculum leaders have initiated visits to the sending schools to meet with teachers and guidance counselors. When effective curriculum coordination exists within and among departments, as well as vertically within the district, students have the best chance of meeting both 21<sup>st</sup> century and content learning expectations. (Endicott survey, self-study, district leadership, teachers, students, curriculum subcommittee, curriculum guides)

Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are currently insufficient in some areas to support WRHS's ability to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. Seventy percent of staff members reports that they have insufficient instructional materials to implement the curriculum. Only 15 percent of staff reports that there is adequate funding to support co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. Many teachers cite they are challenged by outdated and inadequate inventories of textbooks. Some students and parents report having to use damaged or incomplete texts; however, 70 percent of parents reports that their students are provided with adequate materials needed for classes. Teacher resourcefulness often masks the extent of the problem. For example, teachers in the English department rotate the use of paperbacks because there are not enough for all classes to access them simultaneously; other teachers supplement their outdated texts with copied handouts of more up-to-date resources. Math teachers note that the Common Core State Standards are not reflected in the texts available to them. Science teachers report having access to very few supplies to complete lab experiments; many of these supplies are reported to be in poor or aging condition.

While 45.5 percent of staff members states that staffing levels are inadequate to fully implement the curriculum, student achievement and class size data do not generally support this. The class sizes at WRHS approximate the state average, although there are a small number of classes with very large or very small class sizes.

Despite only 56.5 percent of parents reporting that the library's resources are sufficient to support their students' learning, the media center is an integral part of the school's curriculum efforts. Sixty-one percent of students reports that their teachers assign work that requires them to use information and to carry out research in the library media center. Seventy-seven percent of students reports that the school provides adequate materials and resources needed for each class. The library/media

specialist and most teachers interviewed agree that there are sufficient print and non-print resources to support most student work.

Eighty-five percent of parents and 52 percent of staff members agree that the school facilities are adequate to support fully the implementation of curriculum. Staff members cite the school's technology infrastructure as insufficient to support teachers and students in using technology consistently and effectively. Ensuring that the curriculum is supported with sufficient staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center is critical to helping students develop 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and providing opportunities for students to apply these skills to co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. (Endicott survey, self-study, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website, students, parents, teachers, curriculum subcommittee)

The district provides the school's professional staff with limited personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research. Thirty-seven percent of teachers agrees that they have sufficient time to be involved in formal curriculum evaluation, review, and revision. The lack of common planning time to engage in this work is a concern that is repeatedly echoed by teachers and curriculum leaders. Teachers report the only time for department members to meet is the monthly after-school department meetings. As a result, the current process for engaging in professional discourse is largely informal.

Department heads, in coordination with assistant principals, are responsible for the development of curriculum coordination and articulation. Seventy-nine percent of teachers agrees that they are also involved in the evaluation, review, and revision of curriculum. However, only 37 percent agrees that they have sufficient time to be engaged in this work. This remains a concern among staff, as discussed during teacher interviews and the curriculum sub-committee meeting. Periodically throughout the year, department heads use MCAS, and midyear and final exam data to inform curriculum and instruction.

Budgetary provisions are allocated for curriculum development, evaluation, and revision, however, ongoing financial constraints often result in termination of this work because of budget freezes. However, the Wachusett Regional School District and

Wachusett Regional Educational Association reached an agreement to dedicate a portion of money for each teacher each year to receive professional development. The principal controls these funds and has discretion on approving professional development time.

The staff uses *Understanding by Design* by Wiggins and McTighe in their curriculum development activities and incorporates principles of the Common Core State Standards framework. Other examples of innovative thinking and practices vary from individual to individual as teachers report using information gained at workshops, conferences, college classes, and in their readings to inform their curriculum revisions. Sharing of these practices is informal among members of the faculty. As the district devotes adequate personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum, students' abilities to practice and achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations will be enhanced. (Endicott survey, self-study, curriculum subcommittee, teachers, district leadership)

### **Commendations**

1. The wide variety of opportunities for students to participate in curricular and co-curricular activities
2. The dedicated leadership of department heads and liaisons
3. The resourcefulness of staff to implement the curriculum in the spite of funding deficits
4. The opportunities for authentic student learning
5. The curriculum that emphasizes depth of knowledge and higher-order thinking
6. The analysis of data by many departments that is collected from common assessments to measure student progress toward mastery of the skills and concepts identified in the curriculum guides

## Recommendations

1. Provide structured time to allow for collaboration and reflection regarding the responsibilities for teaching the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
2. Develop and implement a process for effectively using the school-wide rubrics within and across the existing content curriculum
3. Create and implement a common curriculum template
4. Develop and implement a written curriculum review process to revise all curriculum documents using the new common curriculum template and include guides for each unit of study
5. Ensure that the curriculum includes instructional and assessment strategies that require routine usage of the school-wide rubrics by all teachers
6. Provide the resources needed to fully implement the curriculum
7. Provide dedicated time for staff to align current curriculum to the adopted template and to complete the process for courses that currently have no formal curriculum
8. Implement a process to provide opportunities for cross-curricular planning and learning
9. Provide adequate time and resources for curriculum coordination and vertical articulation between and among all academic areas within the school and district's sending schools

### 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

At WRHS, teachers' instructional practices are somewhat examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. While 73 percent of teachers indicates that they are clearly familiar with the school's identified core value and beliefs about learning, the overt integration of these core values and expectations into instructional practice is inconsistent. Often the degree of integration of the core values and expectations for learning into daily instruction depends on the individual teacher. Seventy percent of teachers indicates that they continuously examine their practice to ensure consistency with the core values and beliefs about learning. Teachers engage in reflective practice as part of the new educator evaluation system that was implemented beginning in the 2012-2013 school year. Individual teachers also have opportunities to attend professional development outside of the district, which can afford opportunities for reflection. However, there is no formal system or structure for ongoing collegial discussion that enables teachers to collaboratively reflect on their instructional practice. (Endicott survey, self-study, students, classroom observations, teachers)

WRHS teachers' instructional practices mostly support the achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations by engaging students as active, self-directed learners and in self-assessment and reflection, emphasizing inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking, but there is a limited amount of integration of technology and cross-disciplinary learning and inconsistency with the personalization of instruction. While 81 percent of staff members states that they offer personalized learning, only 29 percent of students states that teachers personalize. Using *Bloom's Digital Taxonomy of Learning Domains*, 47 percent of instruction observed during the visit reflected a degree of personalization. In some cases, attempts are made to personalize assignments and assessments; however, a large part of student work shows limited evidence of personalization. Personalization is evident in some areas including in the Life Skills program self-advocacy video project and in a CP math class with a problem-based assignment that required students to do a forensic extrapolation of height. Other evidence of personalization includes the science honors project, exhibitions in strong art and music programs, the incorporation of students as classroom learning assistants (CLA), and in the opportunities for students to participate in partnership programs at WRHS. While a few examples of cross-disciplinary efforts exist, they are largely informal, and staff agree that there is only very limited implementation.

There are a variety of educational opportunities for students to engage as active and self-directed learners. In fact, 76 percent of parents states that teachers engage their

sons/daughters as active learners. Students have opportunities to participate in independent studies and a science fair in which they pursue work that is defined by their own interests and curiosities. However, it is not clear whether students at all levels actively make use of these opportunities. Additionally, students report taking an active role in structuring their Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Some classes incorporate a variety of collaborative activities and assignments, including problem- and project-based learning opportunities. Teachers report and were observed to offer students choices in some assignments. However, students report inconsistency in this practice. Sixty-three percent of students reports that they often have choices, while others report playing largely inactive roles in their learning in some classes. Seventy percent of parents and 90 percent of staff indicate that they emphasize inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking to support achievement of the school's learning expectations. Among parents and students there is a consensus that this depends on the level of the class, and that the expectations change with the levels. Inquiry practices are also built into the school's curriculum maps.

An area where WRHS excels is the application of knowledge and skills to authentic tasks. Students are afforded a number of opportunities to engage in these real life experiences. These include working in the school bank, *Echo* (the school newspaper), the Post-Graduate paper, calculating installation cost and labor to develop a floor plan in math, model UN activities, debate club, *rhubarb pie* (poetry publication), DECA, preschool, culinary arts, and textiles programs. While 65 percent of teachers say that they allowed for self-assessment and reflection, this was not seen with regularity or consistency. In addition, students identify limited opportunities for self-assessment. While there is use of available technology for instruction, it is not fully integrated. Seventy-five percent of students say that they use some form of technology to complete assignments. Some technology, such as clickers and document cameras, are used to deliver instruction in some departments. However, the full integration is limited by bandwidth, infrastructure, and availability of common labs. Teachers do their best to work around this, including having students do some of this work outside of school. Once instructional practices routinely personalize instruction, integrate technology and cross-disciplinary opportunities, engage students as active and self-directed learners, emphasize inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking, engage students in self-assessment and reflection, students will be afforded opportunities to apply knowledge and learning in an active and engaged classroom environment. (Endicott survey, teachers, student work, self-study, students, panel presentation, parents, classroom observations)

Teachers occasionally adjust their instructional practice to meet the needs of each student. Teachers cite examples of formative assessment methods that are used department-wide, including the use of critiques in English classes and clicker data in the math department. However, this practice appears to be inconsistent and dependent on the department or individual teachers. Other methods used by individual teachers include exit tickets, whiteboards, pre-assessment, and informal teacher check-ins. The degree to which these are used to adjust instruction is unclear. Students cite limited use of formative assessment data to adjust instruction and provide accounts of instances where formative assessment data indicated the need to adjust instruction but no adjustment was actually made.

Teachers strategically differentiate across the four-course levels that exist within the Wachusett Regional High School. Ninety percent of teachers says that they differentiate their instruction, possibly due to the leveled course structure that exists within the school. Differentiation is often instituted in the form of varied assessment supports for students at different levels as well as with the use of different instructional strategies for student in the CP and AP classes. Examples of different supports include the incorporation of formulas and word banks for CP students to use on assessments in math, world languages, and social studies classes, while CPA students take the same assessment without these supports. Using *Bloom's Digital Taxonomy of Learning Domains*, teachers in thirteen percent of CP classes observed during the visitation introduced differentiation instructional strategies while teachers in fifty-six percent the CPA classes observed introduced differentiation instructional strategies. Even so, other forms of differentiation are less evident in the middle level courses. Sixty-nine percent of students says that their teachers use a variety of teaching strategies, and some students cite courses in which the structure of the class was exactly the same every day. Only 42 percent of students reports that their teachers make learning exciting and interesting for them. While students in CP courses consistently reported more opportunities for differentiation and revision of work, this was not the case for courses at other levels. Most classes incorporated some form of group learning activity, such as chemistry labs, AP Calculus and CP Algebra 2 problem-solving activities, small group discussions of homework in English classes and opportunities to work together to teach other students in physics classes. In some cases, students were able to choose their own groups while in others they were assigned to groups. In a physics class that worked on a Concrete Boat project, students were required to take on different roles within the project work. Overall, 90 percent of students says that their teachers incorporate group activities into classes.

Students consistently praise teacher commitment to additional support. Eighty percent of parents agrees that teachers provide additional support to their sons/daughters when needed. Teachers regularly stay after school with students to provide extra help. Teachers were observed to do frequent check-ins with their students during class. In addition, some classes have student assistants who are available to provide individual support to students during class time. Teachers often spend their own money to purchase instructional supplies to ensure that students within the school receive an education that is comparable to or exceeds that of students in other communities. As one example, an art teacher has written several grants to supplement the department's limited supply budget.

Overall, the adjustment of instructional practice, while strong in the areas of support and collaborative learning is limited by inconsistent implementation in the key areas of formative assessment and differentiation within classes. A focus on implementation and analysis of formative assessment data for instructional use and an increase in differentiation practices within classes will ensure that the school is able to meet the needs of all students. (self-study, teachers, instruction subcommittee, students, Endicott survey, school leadership team, classroom observations)

Teachers adequately work to improve their instructional practice, both individually and collaboratively. At WRHS, teachers informally use their existing prep time to collaborate with one another to improve their instructional practices through professional discourse and reflection. The use of achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments varies in practice. The math and social studies departments report using data from midterms and clickers to inform their practice, which helps them identify areas of weakness in content-based instruction. Most departments report using their midterm assessment data to drive changes to content-based instruction. However, outside of analysis of midterm, final exam, and MCAS data, the use of student achievement data is largely dependent on the individual teacher. There is, however, limited evidence that student work is examined. Student work is looked at mainly to provide student feedback and to ensure consistency in grading. Even so, limited evidence exists on how it informs instruction. Only 53 percent of teachers say they have formal opportunities to examine student work. While there is no formal mechanism in place for using feedback from a variety of sources, it does occur to some extent at WRHS. Students also report inconsistency with feedback. Forty percent of them reports that teachers ask for their ideas to improve how they teach, and 17 percent of parents reports that teachers have asked for their feedback. Some teachers seek input on course structure and work on goal setting with students

after midterms. Staff members report frequent email communications with parents. Department heads frequently spend time in classrooms and provide feedback to individual teachers.

The school media center provides resources to staff for accessing current research on effective instructional practice. There is limited evidence of the use of current research to inform instructional practice. However, the school leadership team reports having looked at articles and research related to homework practices as part of a year-long discussion of homework assignment practices during school breaks. The process for engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice is largely informal. Teachers report engaging in discussions related to practice during lunch as well as during prep periods. The staff as a whole was part of a discussion related to homework assignment practices during the 2011-2012 school year. In addition, the world languages and social studies departments include discussions related to grading practices as part of department conversations. There is limited evidence on how school leaders communicate an expectation that improving instruction is important and professional discourse contributes to that improvement. Hence, 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, and engaging in professional discourse on instructional practice, individually and collectively will ensure that teachers use best practice to improve instructional practices. (teachers, self-study, students, panel presentation, Endicott survey)

WRHS teachers independently maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. Ninety percent of students and 93 percent of staff state that teachers are knowledgeable and maintain expertise in their content area as well as in content-specific instructional practice. Teachers take a variety of courses on their own and attend a variety of outside professional development workshops to support their content-area expertise. While there is no formal mentoring program in place, new teachers are encouraged to observe colleagues in their departments in order to grow and reflect upon their own instructional practice. Teachers who are new to WRHS are provided a five-day orientation before the school year begins and ten sessions throughout the school year. The most prevalent form of reflection is evidenced as part of the newly implemented formal educator evaluation system. Teachers' dedication to the pursuit of professional growth opportunities outside of the district along with their individual reflection on instructional practice enable them to maintain

expertise in their content area. (Endicott survey, department heads, classroom observations, self-study)

### **Commendations**

1. The variety of opportunities for authentic learning experiences through the music and arts, post-graduate, and partnership programs
2. The teachers' strong overall commitment to support all students
3. The teachers' informal collaboration to improve their instructional practices and monitor their effectiveness in the classroom
4. The variety of educational opportunities for students to engage as active and self-directed learners
5. The dedicated faculty pursuit of opportunities for growth, at their own expense, in their area of expertise through the attendance of professional development conferences and through coursework
6. The active role of students in structuring their Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
7. The variety of group activities teachers incorporate into classes

### **Recommendations**

1. Establish and implement a formal process that supports all teachers to consistently examine the alignment of instruction with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
2. Provide structured time for collaborative reflection on instructional practice both within and among departments within the school day
3. Increase opportunities for students to self-assess, including the use of school-wide rubrics, and reflect continuously throughout the school year
4. Budget for, provide, and implement in-house professional development to enhance all areas of instruction
5. Expand technology infrastructure to enable more consistent technology-based instruction

6. Develop formal cross-disciplinary collaboration opportunities by implementing common planning time and inter-disciplinary courses
7. Develop and implement a process with a recognized protocol and designated time to regularly examine student work utilizing formative assessment data to inform instructional practice
8. Provide professional development opportunities relating to use of formative assessment for teachers and school leadership
9. Formalize mentoring program for new teachers

## Teaching and Learning Standard

# 4 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

The professional staff at Wachusett Regional High School has yet to employ 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. Twenty-eight percent of staff members agrees that they use the school-wide rubrics when assessing student work. It is clear that the use of school-wide rubrics is in the developmental stages and many departments have yet to adopt the school-wide rubrics. Although many teachers attach rubrics with their assessments, there is no clear evidence that school-wide rubrics are being consistently used across departments throughout the school. The school-wide rubrics are aligned with the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations statement and are relatively new to the faculty and there has been little training in their use. While some faculty members address many of the learning expectations, there is not a process in place to ensure that every student is assessed on each of the school's learning expectations. Consequently, when the professional staff members are able to continuously employ 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, they will have data upon which to base curriculum development and revision as well as to improve instructional strategies as they relate to the school-wide academic, civic, and social expectations. (Endicott survey, assessment subcommittee, teachers, self-study)

Wachusett Regional High School's professional staff members do not formally communicate individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to students and their families. Although all teachers communicate individual student achievement through a traditional grading system, there is no separate reporting of student progress toward meeting the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. There is also no vehicle in place to report effectively the school's progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to the school community. Forty-six percent of parents disagrees that the school provides a formal report which explains their son's/daughter's progress in achieving school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Teachers indicate that they do not communicate with students or parents regarding the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Fifty-four percent of parents reports that the school reports individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to students and their families. Although the school employs a variety of ways to communicate student progress of course grades to students, parents, and the community (i.e., *PowerSchool*, report cards, PSAT results,

phone calls home, email, and the school's website) about individual and school achievements, it has yet to formally incorporate individual and school-wide progress on the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations into those reports. The communication of individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to students, families, and the school community will ensure the engagement of all stakeholders in the school improvement process and will support student learning. (Endicott survey, parents, teachers, students, student work)

Some of the professional staff of Wachusett Regional High School continually collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement through common summative assessments and standardized testing. Seventh grade MCAS results, common midterm, and final assessments, drive the placement for the high school's math, science, and world languages departments. PSAT results inform students and parents of Advanced Placement potential. The math department disaggregates MCAS results and disseminates the results to those teachers whose students took the exam. Results are used for the purpose of leveling and scheduling. The world languages department also reviews common assessment data for placement. However, across the disciplines, there is no evidence to confirm that data is used to respond to inequities in student achievement. Further work on analysis of students' achievement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations will help to ensure that all students are meeting them and are poised for success in the future. (department data, self-study, guidance counselors, district principals)

Prior to each unit of study, some teachers at Wachusett Regional High School communicate to students the school's applicable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be addressed. Sixty-six percent of students reports that their teachers explain what the learning expectations are before each unit of study. Fifty-two percent of teachers agrees that they communicate to students the school's learning expectations prior to each unit of study, as well as 56 percent of parents. As noted in science, English, and world languages unit plans, the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations are addressed. Within teacher unit plans grading rubrics, big ideas, and essential questions are evident. Teachers use their websites and their syllabi to communicate their unit-specific learning goals. Although some students have the benefit of unit-specific learning goals prior to unit study, the absence of planned access to 21<sup>st</sup> century skill development must become a common practice throughout the school to render them familiar and effective as guiding principles. (self-study, Endicott survey, teachers' webpages, student work)

Some teachers at Wachusett Regional High School share corresponding rubrics with students prior to summative assessments. Seventy-seven percent of students indicates that they understand in advance what work they must accomplish to meet their teachers' expectations. Similarly, 77 percent of students responds that teachers use rubrics to assess their work, as well as 83 percent of students understands the rubrics the teachers used. Providing rubrics to all students ensures that students have knowledge of what is expected on summative assessments. (Endicott survey, self-study, teachers, classroom observations)

A number of teachers of Wachusett Regional High School, in each unit of study, employs a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments. Ninety percent of the teachers agrees that they use a variety and range of assessment strategies including, but not limited to, formative and summative assessments. Using *Bloom's Digital Taxonomy of Learning Domains*, 47 percent of classroom observations, formative assessment was evident in a variety of ways: check-ins, dip-sticking, tickets to leave, warm-up, problem of the day, and clickers. Additionally, in the evidence provided, world languages, social studies, and English departments give feedback during the revision process of writing. Students are given opportunities to rewrite and revise a wide variety of written assessments. Students report, that within certain departments, teachers do give students the opportunity to retake quizzes and amend answers to assignments. Employing a wide range of assessment strategies and functions will ensure students' learning is more thoroughly assessed in light of their learning preferences. (classroom observations, Endicott survey, student work, self-study)

Some teachers collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments. Prior to the self-study for the school accreditation, seven early release days were provided to the school leadership team, faculty, and staff to collaborate on curriculum, instruction, and assessment. During the past year, faculty members used the early release time to work on the NEASC self-study. In addition to the early release days, one after-school meeting was available for all department members to collaborate on department specific topics. These meetings were not limited to assessment review and the early release time will again be used for teaching and learning issues beginning the fall of 2014. The staff revises midterms and finals at this time to reflect changes in the curriculum. There is evidence that common assessment results are summarized and disseminated by some department chairs. Teachers express that there is a lack of time

available for collaboration on formative assessments. The assessment subcommittee reports that peer observations and collaboration have not been as frequent since the building renovations. They cite the lack of department-dedicated areas, common planning time, and the distance between classrooms as factors that impede formal sharing of ideas. Additionally, there is no evidence of collaboration across curriculum areas to promote common writing assignments, portfolios, or major projects. Regular and formal teacher collaboration across the school to create, analyze, and revise common formative and summative assessments will create a richer, more consistent understanding of what students know and are able to do. (assessment subcommittee, teachers, district principals, self-study, student work)

Most teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work. Sixty-two percent of students believes that teachers grade their work in a reasonable amount of time; 64 percent believes that teachers offer suggestions to help them improve their work. Many students submit their written assignments via *Google.docs* and Turnitin.com as well as revisions to their work in multiple departments. Additionally, students report that in certain departments, specific assignments may be revised or retaken. Most departments also review summative data and reteach problematic concepts prior to standardized or year-end tests. Continued consistent, specific, timely, and corrective feedback of student revisions, and consistent improvements of their work will ensure that the school supports improved student achievement and will teach students how assessment is part of the learning process. (Endicott survey, students, student work, self-study)

Many Wachusett Regional High School teachers use the results of their formative assessments to adapt their instructional strategies within a lesson or prior to the next lesson in order to improve student learning, but this strategy is inconsistently applied across all content areas. Formative assessments are used by individual teachers in a variety of ways. A math teacher uses warm-ups and “do nows” at the beginning of some classes as a starting place for lessons. An English teacher reports using formative assessments on an introductory topic to create heterogeneous groups for an activity. Some teachers use clickers and tickets to leave while other teachers employ a wide variety of questioning techniques and responses throughout lessons across disciplines to immediately inform instruction. A number of teachers respond that they frequently adjust lessons based on informative formative assessment results. Projects and written papers are often chunked and students are given the opportunity to be critiqued so they can revise their work. Finally, some teachers use pre-tests to make decisions about how

to pace the instruction in a unit. The thoughtful, deliberate, and more frequent use of formative assessments to inform and adapt instruction improves student understanding and learning. (classroom observations, teachers, student work, self-study)

Although teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student and teacher learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice, this is not a consistent or school-wide practice. There is a variety of evidence that teachers individually use assessments to determine learning gaps and adjust their lessons accordingly. Although 55.8 percent of staff indicates that they agree there is collaboration and examination of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising and improving curriculum and instructional practices, time and scheduling issues discourage the regular occurrence of this process. Some students report that while they have opportunities to revise work and feel comfortable asking teachers to modify curriculum and instruction to better match their ability to learn, these opportunities are not widespread across classrooms within the school. Evidence provided to the visiting committee reveals that the use of formative assessment as part of student work submitted to revise and improve student learning is inconsistent from department to department. There were few examples of select common assessments that were reviewed for the purpose of enhancing student understanding and informing instruction, however, these samples of student work were infrequent and did not provide sufficient evidence of the examination of student learning for the purpose of revising and improving instructional practice. Moreover, in some courses, common summative assessments are not consistently used among all teachers teaching the same level of a course. While 79.5 percent of students indicates that they agree teachers use a variety of assessment methods, this does not reflect whether or not students sense that teachers utilize assessments for the purpose of revising curriculum or for improving their instructional practice. MCAS data from sending schools is used for ninth grade course placement but is not disseminated to teachers or used to revise curriculum. Data from alumni student surveys are not collected to provide additional insight in how to use effectively formative and assessment student performance to improve student learning and to inform curriculum, instruction, and assessment strategies.

The school has created and adopted the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, and these expectations are posted in many classrooms and are listed in the program of studies. However, most teachers are not yet assessing achievement of these expectations. Among the teachers who are using school-wide rubrics to assess their

students on the achievement of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, there is no method to collect and analyze the results to revise curriculum and improve instructional practice. The examination of a broad range of evidence enables teachers and administrators to revise curriculum and improve instruction in an effort to improve student achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. When the school adopts a system of consistent formal analysis of student assessment results based on its own expectations and the use of its own rubrics, students will be able to understand the results and improve learning, and teachers will be able to use the results to improve curricula and instruction. (Endicott survey, self-study, assessment subcommittee, student work, panel presentation, school leadership team, teachers)

Grading and reporting practices are rarely reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. Only 46 percent of the staff reports that the school-wide grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised. Little evidence was provided that there are discussions among or between departments regarding grading practices. Staff members are currently given autonomy to set grading policies in their classes and the result is that teachers teaching the same course at the same level may use different grading scales. Students mention that teachers have their own grading policies and procedures and that a variety of reporting methods are employed. The science department uses a common rubric for the honors project that is mandatory for all students. School-wide rubrics are not being used to assess the school's learning beliefs in most departments and there is no reporting practice in place for learning expectations. Ensuring that grading and reporting practices are reviewed and revised on a regular basis, leads to consistency and equity when evaluating students. (Endicott survey, self-study, department heads, teachers)

### **Commendations**

1. The world languages department consistently uses the written communication and oral communication school-wide rubric on assessments
2. Teachers in some departments give students the opportunity to retake quizzes and amend answers to assignments
3. The common assessment results that are summarized and disseminated by those department chairs to members of the department

4. The specific, timely, and corrective feedback by many teachers to ensure students revise and improve their work
5. The formal criteria used by the district sending schools in determining the placement of incoming ninth grade students
6. Teacher websites that are maintained and provided to the public are clear in their 21<sup>st</sup> learning expectations of what students are expected to know and do
7. The use of technology to formally assess students' work

### **Recommendations**

1. Develop and implement a clear formal process for the use of school-wide rubrics to assess school-wide and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
2. Use school-wide rubrics consistently throughout the school to formally assess student and school-wide progress toward mastering the WRHS 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
3. Ensure that all students have sufficient opportunities to practice and demonstrate proficiency on each of the school-wide expectations
4. Develop and implement a process to communicate individual student progress and the whole school's progress in achieving the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to students, to their families, and to the community
5. Develop and implement a formal process for all teachers to receive results of incoming and current students' standardized testing
6. Analyze student performance data for the purpose of adjusting curriculum and instruction and for identifying students who need additional support
7. Fully integrate the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations into common course assessments

8. Align course-specific rubrics with the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and school-wide rubrics
9. Provide students with analytic rubrics prior to instruction to increase student understanding of course and unit expectations
10. Provide time for formal teacher collaboration, both within and among departments, on assessments and assessment practices
11. Examine data collected from common formative assessments and student work to guide collaborative curriculum decisions in a purposeful and deliberate manner
12. Research and create a school-wide policy on grading and reporting procedures

# **SUPPORT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS**

*SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP*

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*SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING*

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*COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING*

# 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 school community consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supporting culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all. Eighty-five percent of students indicates that they feel safe in the school and 67 percent feels they are respected by teachers. Ninety-two percent of staff reports that the school's culture is safe, supportive, and positive. This is coupled with 90 percent of parents. The student body has access to more than 55 clubs and organizations that are facilitated by individual faculty advisors. The school community has fostered an environment in which student responsibility is embedded in the culture and climate. Serious discipline issues are rare and student misconduct has declined over the past five years as illustrated by school discipline reports. Students exhibit ownership and pride for their school and teachers mirror this sentiment. Teachers and administrators work to build strong personal relationships with students. As a result of the positive school culture, students feel safe, supported, and empowered to take an active role in their learning. (Endicott survey, self-study, student handbook, panel presentation, teachers, parents, students)

The school community is equitable and inclusive, but has yet to foster heterogeneity where every student over the course of the high school experience is enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core course. In their first year, all students are required to enroll in an unlevleed freshman seminar course. This seminar introduces students to learning expectations and provides them with the tools and skills to succeed academically and socially in high school. Administrators and faculty members identify scheduling issues that do not allow every student to experience heterogeneously grouped core courses outside their grade level. Over 75 percent of students indicates that they have a number of opportunities to take courses in which students of different ability levels are enrolled. Additionally, there are a number of these courses listed in the program of study. Students of all ability levels, ethnicity, and socio-economic status achieve greater academic and social success when grouped equitably, inclusively, and heterogeneously. (student and parent handbook, Endicott survey, school culture and leadership subcommittee, self-study, classroom observations, teachers, students)

There is a foundation for 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. The activity period serves as the vehicle for the implementation of this program. The program is implemented during an activity/homeroom period, which is scheduled once a week for twenty-five minutes. All students are assigned to one teacher who leads the curriculum for this program over the course of students' four-year high school experience. Additionally, select seniors are grouped with freshmen through this program and they work to build relationships throughout the school year. Students and teachers report that the program has not been consistently followed or effective. Forty-one percent of students feels that they have access to an adult, in addition to their guidance counselor, with whom they meet regularly and know well. In discussions with students, they note they are not *Connect-Ed* to their activity program teacher and do not seek them out when in need of support. Fifty-three percent of faculty members reports active participation in the school's formal program. The effectiveness of the activity period varies from class to class and is dependent upon the engagement level of faculty and student mentors. The inclusion of senior mentors within freshmen homerooms supports the school culture and core values. A formal, effective advisory program with a curriculum based on support for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations will provide students with the opportunity to connect with an adult member of the school who will help individual students achieve the school's learning expectations. (students, teachers, school leadership team, Endicott survey, self-study)

In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff have yet to develop a consistently implemented formal system which offers opportunities for professional discourse and formal time to implement and apply the skills learned to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Faculty and staff use resources within and outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices on an informal basis. Although faculty workrooms allow for collegial discussions and collaboration among teachers, this collaborative effort is neither goal-based nor is it evaluated in any meaningful way. Physical and time constraints hinder the effectiveness of both co-curricular and cross-curricular collaboration evidenced by the lack of implementation of school-wide rubrics. Professional development opportunities are offered and are attended by faculty and staff across curriculum areas; however, teachers and department heads report that they are not held accountable for these activities. In addition, professional development is not structured and designed to meet the curricular and instructional needs of the school. Likewise, the budget constraints prevent teachers from attending professional development during the school day because a substitute budget does not

exist. Fifty-three percent of faculty reports that professional development enables them to acquire and use skills to improve instruction and assessment. In contrast, teacher conversations and meetings reflect limited collaborative discussions about common professional development and the manner in which departments may use the information to advance as a cohesive unit. Professional development time must become more structured to guarantee engagement in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning, to consistently use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices and to continue to apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained from these practices. (teachers, Endicott survey, school leadership team, self-study, students)

School leaders have begun to implement a research-based evaluation and supervision process focused on improved student learning. The school leadership team has tailored the new state educator evaluation system to fit the needs of their school and has begun to evaluate teachers using this process. The leadership team is primarily responsible for the evaluations of all teachers across the content areas. Department heads serve as instructional mentors and do not participate in this process. Thus, eight administrators are responsible for the evaluations of 134.4 teachers, with a load of approximately 20 to 25 teachers per evaluator. The evaluation system developed by the district requires that ten observations are conducted per evaluation year. Following an evaluation year, administrators must make four classroom observations for professional status teachers and ten for non-professional teachers. Although rigorous in terms of evaluator time in the classroom, the nature of the classroom observations provide limited feedback, delivery, and follow-up to faculty members. Feedback is delivered via email and in writing, but face-to-face post observation conferences are rare. In instances where teachers disagree with an overall summative rating, a panel is created to review all evidence and reports related to the final rating of teacher proficiency. Overall, 70 percent of teachers reports that input from supervisors who are responsible for evaluations serve as an important role in improving instructional practice. Teachers have commented that the process is relatively new and that they continue to learn how to engage in a collegial and collaborative discussion process. A majority of teachers refers to department heads as the main source for instructional feedback. With the implementation of a research-based evaluation and supervision process focused on improved student learning that is guided by the school community's core values and beliefs about teaching and learning, there is an emphasis by teachers and administrators to engage in meaningful conversations around instructional practices that will support

all students in achieving the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (school leadership team, curriculum facilitator, teachers, Endicott survey)

The organization of time hinders professional collaboration among teachers, which limits the use of research-based instruction to enhance the learning needs of most students. The design of the schedule limits professional collaboration among educators who teach the same courses. Teachers report that they may not see a colleague throughout the school year outside department meeting times. The structure of the house system hinders intra- and inter-departmental communication. Teachers' instructional time is divided between two houses and two instructional levels. Numerous faculty members indicate that the majority of their time outside of the classroom is spent in their workroom with teachers from different subjects and not necessarily their collegial peers. However, the inclusion of one long block a day allows teachers to incorporate a variety of instructional methodologies into lessons once every seven days. With a rotating class schedule, students and teachers meet at different times of the day over the course of the scheduling cycle. They report that the rotating schedule provides variability in the learning experience. An organization of time throughout the school community that supports the delivery of curriculum and best instructional practices and also provides opportunities for professional collaboration will more fully support the learning needs of all students. (student shadowing, teachers, school leadership team, self-study)

Student load and class size are adequate to meet the learning needs of individual students. Eighty-two percent of students feels that their class size are reasonable and 80 percent of parents echos this sentiment. These low figures are further supported by evidence from the state website that the average class size is similar to the state average of 18.2. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education reports that the average class size at WRHS was 17.9 in 2011, 18.5 in 2012, and 18.5 in 2013. Class rosters show a range of five students to as many as 34 students in classroom settings. Currently, four percent of classes have a class size of 30 or more. Nine of these courses are required courses in English, mathematics, and history with the remaining 14 are in physical education and music and band. Average class size by department ranges from 13.3 to 24.5. This variation has created negative sentiments throughout the school. Fifty-seven percent of teachers reports that course load and class size do not enable them to meet the learning needs of individual students. Teachers report that in the last four years class sizes have increased with no set maximum. The leadership team cites a need for further review as there are increased discrepancies in the number

of electives offered in some core content areas as well as the disparity in class size. Teachers express that class size and load changes in the past four years, in conjunction with the budget, hinder their ability to personalize instruction as well as to provide students with the necessary instructional materials. However, student load and class size is not above the state average and student achievement is evident in school-wide data. Appropriate class sizes in all classes will help ensure that all students will be able to meet the school's expectations. (Endicott survey, teachers, students, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website, class rosters, school leadership team)

The principal and other building leaders provide instructional leadership but it is minimally rooted in the schools' CVBLE. Core values, beliefs, and learning expectations have been identified but it is unclear as to the structures in place for the implementation of these values. The integration of the core values is relatively new, and thus, the role of the principal's and other building leaders in guiding, directing, and supporting instruction rooted in the values continues to be a work in progress. The school leadership team, consisting of the principal, assistant principals, directors of guidance and special education, meet on a regular basis during leadership meetings. On a bi-weekly basis these meetings include the curriculum department heads and liaisons. During these meetings, instructional decisions are brought forth and collegial decision-making is honored. Building faculty meetings are held on a monthly basis. Teachers report these to be directive and lead by the principal. Agenda items are set by the principal and focus on current issues related to school management issues. Fifty-eight percent of teachers feels the principal and other school-based administrators provide instructional leadership that is consistent with the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. Teachers also report that instructional and curriculum issues are discussed during department meetings led by department heads. It is clear to teachers that the principal directs the agenda for these department meetings. The culture and climate of the school is such that teachers and students feel they can discuss a variety of issues with the principal whenever necessary. Students and teachers report that there is a perception that the assistant principals and curriculum leaders are given primary responsibility for instruction. When all key stakeholders work collaboratively toward the shared vision to carry out the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations under an active instructional leadership provided by the principal and his leadership team, the school will continuously reflect upon and improve learning for all students, thereby promoting its core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, Endicott survey, school leadership team, department heads, students, teachers)

Teachers, students, and parents are minimally involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership. The school involves faculty and staff in traditional monthly meetings, which communicate important information and provide a forum for discussion. These traditional monthly meetings are reported to be administrative-driven with the principal leading all activities. The school also has an active faculty advisory council. This council brings important information to the school leadership team and then reports back to faculty. The voice of parents is heard by administration, but not actively sought for major school-wide decisions. Students are represented within student council and two are selected as liaisons to the regional school committee. Fifty percent of students, staff, and parents feel that they are involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership. Interviews with students, teachers, and support staff, indicate that the school needs to provide formal, consistent, and meaningful opportunities for stakeholder voices to be heard in decision-making. Through structures such as *Connect-Ed*, the school communicates with all stakeholders. The willingness of the leadership team to welcome new ideas is evident through conversations with teachers and department heads. However, students report that their opinions are not always sought on many initiatives or decisions. Students' perception is that their input is sometimes sought by administrators and that they have minimal impact on school-wide changes. Limited opportunities to participate in decision-making processes fail to empower staff, students, and parents and hinder the promotion of responsibility and ownership in school policy and change. (self-study, teachers, Endicott survey, students, parents)

Teachers adequately exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. Teachers display extraordinary concern for their student needs both within and outside of the learning environment. They work to find creative ways to meet the needs of students despite budget concerns. Students are aware of this and report that teachers attempt to meet their needs on a regular basis. Many teachers spend personal money to ensure that students have the materials that they need as part of classroom instruction. These efforts, along with the multitude of teacher-led clubs and organization, speak to the high level of faculty involvement and dedication in the school. Teachers serve on a number of committees and in a number of organizations that improve school culture and climate as well as in the review and revision of curriculum. In particular, the school's freshman seminar program is designed to identify problems associated with school culture and climate and work to mediate these problems in a classroom setting.

Teachers report that the physical organization of the school into multiple houses inhibits increased levels of collaboration in the review and revision of curriculum, assessment, and instructional practices. Despite the barriers placed on teachers by the structural formation and budget, a majority of teachers brings new ideas and initiatives to their curriculum head on a regular basis. Teachers exercise initiative and leadership that positively enhance school culture to increase the level of student engagement in learning. (classroom observations, teachers, students, school leadership team)

The relationship between and among the school board, superintendent, and principal is mutually supportive, but lacks collaborative, reflective, and constructive exchanges necessary to promote the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Central office administrators and members of the district leadership team indicate that turnover in district personnel impede the ability of school leadership to collaborate in the implementation of programs, policies, and procedures related to the achievement of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The school committee is very large with 22 members from five different communities. School committee members feel that communication between the superintendent and board occurs frequently. Past meeting minutes, emails, and superintendent reports are readily available. Communications between the principal and superintendent do not specify procedures for the rollout of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The high school core values and learning expectations are not discussed with elementary and middle school principals. Additionally, the high school principal has been excused from attending district K through 8 curriculum meetings with the superintendent and other district principals. School committee members purport that technology improvements are relatively non-existent due to budget constraints. Likewise, 33 percent of staff also reports the school committee, superintendent, and principal collaborate in the process of achieving learning expectations. The unclear future of technology has also prohibited conversations surrounding the incorporation of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations into school improvement planning. A continued collaborative and reflective relationship among the school committee, superintendent, and principal will be an essential part of the school's efforts to promote the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and will help students master them to be college and career ready. (school committee, school leadership team, district principals, Endicott survey, district leadership, teachers)

The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient autonomy to make all school-based decisions. The principal's job description names the principal as the "chief administrator" at the high school charged with overseeing,

supervising, and directing the daily operations and educational programs under the guidelines set forth by the district. The job description does not include language, which identifies the principal as the key “instructional leader” at the high school nor does it illustrate his specific role in upholding the core values and beliefs of the institution. The principal has clearly been given the authority to make all decisions regarding the high school as evidenced through conversations with administrators, school committee members, and other district principals. Fifty-nine percent of parents reports that they feel the school committee and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient authority to lead the school. Thirty-seven percent of staff members feels that the school committee and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority. Thus, although the specific role of the principal in upholding school-wide learning expectations is unclear, the school committee and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority that supports school culture and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. (district leadership, school leadership team, teachers, Endicott survey, self-study)

### **Commendations**

1. The strong sense of community that fosters a supportive educational environment for all stakeholders
2. The diverse collection of clubs and activities that allows for a multitude of opportunities for all students
3. The positive and constructive interpersonal relationships among students, teachers, and staff that create safe learning environments
4. The educational community that supports a challenging and diverse learning environment
5. The strong sense of equity and inclusivity in the learning environment that ensures equal access to school-wide curriculum
6. The school leadership team that functions as a cohesive unit
7. The positive relationships that exist throughout the educational community

8. The willingness of faculty members to expend personal funds to support and provide students with required supplies to complete their assignments
9. The faculty and staff dedication to support the success of all students

## **Recommendations**

1. Establish and implement 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
2. Increase inter-departmental professional development
3. Create opportunities at WRHS for faculty members to explicitly discuss and implement 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations in a collaborative, reflective, and constructive way
4. Include face-to-face feedback sessions and opportunities for reflection in the evaluation process
5. Evaluate current master schedule to more adequately meet the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
6. Ensure that the class size of courses are equitable
7. Develop a formal role description for the principal as instructional leader, which clearly articulates the responsibilities as they pertain to upholding the core values and learning expectations of the school
8. Develop formal structures to engage parents, students, and especially support staff in the decision-making process

## 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

WRHS does have some timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and regular education at-risk students that support each student's achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. A transition class for students with Asperger's Syndrome serves 21 students in grades nine through twelve. Co-teaching occurs most frequently in core academic courses including English, math, science, and social studies. Students on IEPs are serviced in inclusive classrooms, as well as in academic skills remediation classes (ASR), Life Skills program, and alternative education. Only 48 percent of students believes that the school meets the needs of all students. More than 55 percent of parents feels that the school has timely and coordinated strategies to meet the needs of all students. A group of professionals made up of administrators, guidance counselors, teachers, and a school psychologist, called the PST (Problem-Solving Team), meets every other week to discuss intervention strategies for specific students. However, this team lacks a formal plan for collecting, disseminating, and tracking data on the results of recommended and research-based interventions. Without timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, the school is unable to support each student's achievement for the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (Endicott survey, self-study, school resources subcommittee)

The school provides adequate information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services in print, electronic, and audio formats. Health services provide multiple pamphlets and other print communication regarding communicable disease, birth control, sexual assault, safe sex, as well as information on services provided at school, such as annual vision, hearing, and wellness screening. Electronic forms of communication include emails to parents about upcoming events. Guidance counselors communicate with families through *Naviance* and *PowerSchool*. In addition, counselors contact families through mailings, emails, and telephone calls regarding their children's academic and/or social difficulties. Parents and students state that they desire to have additional information regarding the college application process. The school library/media specialist maintains a website that students and parents may access and communicate via *Twitter*. The principal makes regular use of the *Connect-Ed* phone system to communicate with families. Face-to-face communication occurs at guidance and principal coffee hours. Special education communication includes mailings to families, emails, phone calls, and academic progress reports through *PowerSchool*. When the school provides information to

families frequently, especially to those most in need, about available student support services, students and families understand and can take advantage of the services offered. (self-study, parents, students, school website, teachers)

Support services staff members employ a range of technology programs to deliver an effective assortment of coordinated services for all students. The counseling department uses *Naviance* and the College Board website for post-secondary planning. Student health alerts are made available through *PowerSchool*, as well as student demographic information, student attendance records, Individualized Education Plans (IEP), and 504 Plans. Library and media services personnel utilize a wide-range of programs to help students including ABC-CLIO Databases, CQ Researcher, SIRS Researcher, eLibrary, JSTOR, Central Mass Library Catalog, Easy Bib, and Turnitin.com. The special education department utilizes eSPED for IEP writing, Kurzweil for reading assistance, and Notetaker for use by students with dyslexia and other disabilities. Bookshare is an online library utilized by students with print disabilities. This diverse collection of technology enables support services staff to assist students in meeting their 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (guidance counselors, self-study, library/media specialist)

WRHS employs a director of guidance, seven guidance counselors, and two administrative assistants. This staff works closely with the special education department's support staff, including three school psychologists and two part-time administrative assistants. A full-time social worker services the alternative education program. A school resource officer from the Holden Police Department maintains an office in the guidance suite. This officer works directly with administrators, families, and students on an individual and whole-school basis. Counselor caseload ranges from 288 to 305 students. The director of guidance only carries English language learner (ELL) students on her caseload. Twenty-eight students are enrolled in the alternative education program. A growing number of students from a local group home enroll at WRHS. Serving the needs of these students further stretches the availability of counselors for the entire student body.

The guidance curriculum addresses the needs of four different grade levels. It is reported to be delivered through a variety of means including small and large group sessions, individual counseling sessions, and classroom visits. It is also reported that the vast majority of the counselors' time with students is spent addressing social-emotional issues that results in less time spent on course selection, college planning,

and the college application process. Counselors attend IEP and 504 Plan meetings and Problem-Solving Team meetings. In addition, they meet with parents, guardians, representatives from outside agencies, and school personnel. A social worker from YOU, Inc. visits WRHS weekly to meet one-on-one with students.

Although guidance representatives purport that guidance counselors meet with an average of 15-25 students on a daily basis, students convey that meetings occur on average once or twice a year and that these meetings are frequently student-initiated. Upon visiting the guidance suite at different times of the day, students were not observed meeting with counselors. Approximately 17 percent of the students reports that they meet with their counselor regularly; 35.9 percent of parents reports that school counseling personnel meets regularly with their sons or daughters. About 36 percent of staff reports that school counselors meet regularly with students. When school counselors deliver a comprehensive guidance curriculum and meet regularly with students for the purpose of providing 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; and 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, students' ability to meet their learning expectations will be enhanced. (self-study, school resources subcommittee, guidance counselors, students, parents, Endicott survey)

The school's health services do not have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel to provide preventative health services and direct intervention services, referrals, and ongoing health assessments. The ratio of nurses to students serviced limits their ability to use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and to ensure each student achieves the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The health services department is staffed by two full-time registered nurses and one full-time administrative assistant. Among their many responsibilities, the nurses manage dispensing medications (including a number of diabetic students), attend meetings for students on IEP and 504 Plans, maintain immunization records and other medical documents, and ensure that these records are current. Other responsibilities include state-mandated vision, hearing, and body mass index screening, and child abuse reporting. All freshman students are also tested for scoliosis. Nurses assist students directly working with administrators, guidance counselors, and special education staff. Over 72 percent of students affirms

that they are comfortable going to the school nurse. The ratio of two nurses to 2,100 students results in a potentially unsafe situation when one nurse is called to an emergency on school grounds and one nurse is left covering the health office alone. Slightly more than 50 percent of parents feels there is an adequate number of certified personnel and support staff. Approximately 46 percent of parents feels that health services provide preventative and direct intervention services. These numbers reflect the inadequate number of staff available to the school community. Without enough health personnel and support staff to adequately provide services to a school of 2100, the safety and well-being of the Wachusett Regional High School students may be compromised (self-study, health services staff, Endicott survey, school resources subcommittee)

The library and media services are effectively integrated into curriculum and instructional practices and have an adequate number of certified personnel to support staff and students. Over 80 percent of students reports that the library is available to them before, during, and after the school day. The library is staffed by one library/media specialist, one full-time library aide, and one part-time library aide. Due to the resources, instruction, and support provided by the library staff, students are aided in meeting 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations in communication, collaboration, research, and use of technology. It functions as a “learning commons” where students meet not only with classes, but also with tutoring groups and clubs. However, there is no evidence that an assessment of services provided through the library has been administered to continually monitor and improve the delivery of services.

Library staff and teachers collaborate regularly in directing students in research tasks. A binder is kept on file at the main circulation desk with copies of teacher projects and research assignments, enabling the library staff to assist students outside of class time. This collection familiarizes the staff with curriculum requirements and directly involves the library staff in student learning. The library staff also creates book carts with specific materials that teachers request for projects and papers. Over 70 computers in three areas of the media center are available to students and staff. Computers are maintained by the information technology department, thus alleviating further spending from the library budget. Up to five classes can utilize the space effectively at any given time. Computers are loaded with assorted research databases and software necessary for student learning, such as JSTOR and SIRS. The library/media specialist offers direct instruction on how to use these research resources for students and staff alike. There is a wide range of books, periodicals, DVDs, and

other media. Over 86 percent of students confirms that the library provides them with a wide variety of materials, technology, and information services. Also noteworthy is the professional development collection for teachers.

The media center is a major venue for building relationships and promoting the core values of the school. Students work collaboratively in this space, and they volunteer their time in this location to help other students in need through various tutoring groups. Life Skills students utilize the space to learn job skills. They complete various tasks such as restocking shelves and sorting periodicals. Furthermore, the use of a library website, complete with a blog and a *Twitter* account, allows for immediate communication between the media specialist and the student body. Such feedback not only informs the library/media specialist what books and resources students would like added to the media center, it also helps to infuse the role of technology in effective communication practices. Because of the continuing assistance from the library/media specialist and the integration of the library/media services into curriculum and instructional practices, WRHS students are ensured the support of the library/media services to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (Endicott survey, self-study, teachers, students, school resources subcommittee, library staff)

Support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and English language learners, have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff including 19 special education teachers, 28 aides, two speech pathologists, one reading tutor, and three school psychologists, a team chair, and seven guidance counselors. In addition, there is an alternative education program with two special education teachers, a social worker, and a paraprofessional. A transition class for students with Asperger's Syndrome serves 21 students in grades nine through twelve. The special education population is approximately 250 students and there are nearly 130 students with 504 Plans. Students on IEPs are serviced in inclusive classrooms, as well as in academic skills remediation classes (ASR), Life Skills program, and alternative education. Personnel servicing English language learners are appropriate. Reports from staff indicate that collaboration and communication between the special education department and the greater school community is ongoing. Many special education personnel serve as co-teachers in regular education classrooms where there is a population of students on IEPs. The team chair solicits communication regarding matching co-teachers with regular education teachers during the scheduling process. This communication allows these teachers to become more familiar with the curriculum in the content areas. Co-

teaching occurs most frequently in core academic courses including English, math, science, and social studies. Co-teachers in the building have attended professional development workshops for strategies in co-teaching, and both teachers in a co-taught classroom can access teacher gradebook through *PowerSchool*. Utilization of *PowerSchool* allows both instructors to communicate with students and parents regularly regarding student progress. However, teachers cite the lack of built-in common planning time for co-teaching. The lack of substitute classroom aides also negatively affects and hinders the ability for students to reach 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations when the regular classroom aide is not present.

Support services collect and share data from a variety of sources. These sources include a variety of academic, cognitive, and behavioral tests. Other sources of data include transition-planning forms, qualitative observations particularly in Life Skills, *PowerSchool* gradebook, and information collected from community stakeholders, including parents and state agency representatives. Changes are frequently driven by changes in state mandates, collaboration, and examination of existing programs and individual student needs. Adequate staffing, proper support in academic classes, and a wide variety of programs designed to meet the needs of students with individualized education plans, enable students to realize their full potential and to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, students, teachers, school resources subcommittee)

## **Commendations**

1. The multitude of diverse communication formats used to reach families
2. The wide-variety of technological tools utilized effectively by support services staff
3. The positive presence of school resource officer
4. The positive collaboration and school culture promoted through the library
5. The accessible hours for student use of library before, during, and after school
6. The library/media specialist's use of technology to communicate with the student population

7. The wide variety of programs available to special education students
8. The cohesiveness and open communication amongst the special education staff

**Recommendations:**

1. Increase communication among students, families, and guidance regarding the college planning process
2. Develop and implement a data collection plan that all school personnel can access to better meet the needs of all students, including those at risk
3. Provide and implement professional development time dedicated to reviewing research-based interventions and interpreting data
4. Create and implement a systematic plan that allows teachers to recommend students for additional academic support
5. Implement a plan to ensure the effective delivery of the guidance curriculum and related services
6. Describe in detail how the delivery of services of nursing services are currently meeting the needs of a 2100 pupil high school
7. Design and implement a plan in which special education and regular education have adequate time for collaboration to determine appropriate student support services and to formulate specific guidelines for co-taught classes

## 7 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 engages parents and families as partners in each student's education and reach out specifically to those families who have been less Connect-Ed with the school.
8. The school develops productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning.

## Conclusions

Wachusett Regional High School and the district's governing body provides minimally for a range of programs and services, professional and support staff, technology needs and support, sufficient equipment, and sufficient instructional materials and supplies. In the last five years, the student body has increased by 150, yet staff has decreased by seven FTEs. The district's per pupil expenditure is one of the lowest in the state. Faculty members at WRHS have had to limit course offerings and programs, leaving many vacant classrooms and terminating the school's architecture program. The budget is the primary concern for the staff and administration at WRHS, as more and more instructional materials, supplies, and textbooks, being significantly underfunded, class sizes are increasing, and both faculty and support staff are being reduced. Teachers express that class size and load changes in the past four years, in conjunction with the budget, hinder their ability to personalize instruction as well as to provide students with the necessary instructional materials. Only 15 percent of staff reports that the community and the district's governing body provide dependable funding for a wide range of programs and services. Incredibly, the staff has been able to provide exemplary programs due to their collaborations, camaraderie, and resourcefulness, with almost 90 percent of students reporting that their school has a wide range of programs and services. Professional development is a major concern for staff at WRHS. Due to budget constraints, money and time for professional development is essentially non-existent. Technology is also a major concern. When the new school was built, there was no infrastructure in place for wireless Internet or appropriate bandwidth needs. Teachers cannot rely on the technology in their classroom and the two full-time IT techs cannot fully address all of the needs. The visual arts department lacks LED projectors in their classrooms and updated science equipment such as glassware for labs is needed. Due to budget constraints, WRHS staff struggle to provide sufficient instructional materials and supplies. Many textbooks are outdated, some by twenty to thirty years, with almost none addressing the new Common Core State Standards. Teachers, parents, and students comment that some textbooks are missing pages and/or are damaged. Due to the budget freeze, basic materials such as paper and pencils are being bought by classroom teachers. WRHS has been able to maintain the excellence of its academic and elective programs due to the committed, creative, and resourceful staff. That being said, the lack of proper materials and budgetary constraints has impacted staff morale. Dedicated, hardworking WRHS staff preserves its exemplary educational programs, but budget constraints have negatively impacted professional development needs, academic and elective programs,

technology, instructional materials, and supplies. Despite the significant challenges in budget allocations, WRHS demonstrates a steadfast commitment to educate and support all students. (self-study, teachers, Endicott survey, school leadership team, parents, students)

WRHS somewhat develops but minimally funds programs to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant and to properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment. WRHS maintains an impressive facility that is thoroughly cleaned by an organized and diligent custodial staff, but some equipment and maintenance are infrequently maintained due to budget constraints. All maintenance reports are kept in a large binder and equipment directions are kept in binders in the custodian's office. The custodial supervisor maintains electronic records of general maintenance and repairs such as air filter replacements, grounds' care, and general cleaning duties. He is also responsible for the maintenance of supplies, materials, equipment, and allocation to staff. Staff members are responsible for reporting needed repairs and supplies via email. Staff member's report that most of their maintenance needs are promptly attended to, but the lack of funds often leaves equipment or repairs untouched. The custodians are in charge of the upkeep of the expansive indoor spaces and outdoor grounds, which include mowing, trimming, plowing, sanding, sweeping, and athletic field preparation. Eighty-five percent of students and 96 percent of staff feel that their school is clean and well-maintained. It is clear that a dedicated and organized custodial staff maintains the upkeep and cleanliness of the facility, but insufficient planning, budgeting, and preventative maintenance compromise student learning, instruction, co-curricular programs, and school safety. (facility tour, self-study, custodial staff, teachers, Endicott survey)

WRHS offers a wide range of programs and services to support student learning and achievement, but the community does not currently fund a long-range plan that addresses programs and services, enrollment and staffing needs, technology, and capital improvements. At issue is the state funding formula for regional school districts that results in an inadvertent adverse impact on reimbursement formulas that are currently under review by the governor's office and state legislature. In addition, the school is lacking a long-term plan for maintenance of equipment due to the budget. Over 70 percent of staff is either undecided or disagrees that the school has a long-range plan to address facilities, future programs, services, staffing needs, and capital improvements. The lack of funding has resulted in the elimination of seven full-time educators, one custodian, professional development opportunities, and has caused

reductions in technology, programs, and course offerings. As a result, reductions in staffing have increased class sizes. The lack of reliable technology, limited Wi-Fi, and outdated software and computers hinder instruction and course offerings. Wi-Fi is only available in teacher workspaces, the media center, and localized hot spots, and teachers report that technology is unreliable and slow in the classroom. When the new school was built, the capability of Wi-Fi and a large bandwidth was not well-planned, leaving the school unprepared to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Teachers report that the two full-time IT staff are organized and efficient, but are limited in their services due to the lack of high speed Internet and Wi-Fi capabilities. Teachers at WRHS note that past support for the “School Improvement Plan” included expanded technology for students and staff, laptop computers for all teachers, LED projectors in classrooms, hover cams for math and science teachers, iPads for the history department, and an upgraded media center and language lab, but construction cost overruns and lack of adequate funding have impeded some of these goals. When the community funds or there is a change in the state funding formula for regional school districts, and the school implements a long-range plan that addresses programs and services; enrollment changes and staffing needs; facility needs; technology; and capital improvements, its short- and long-range plans can be completed, which will help meet student learning expectations. (self-study, teachers, district leadership, school leadership team, students, facility tour, custodial staff, support staff)

The school leadership team is actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget, but the general faculty is not involved in the development of, and only minimally so, in the implementation of the budget. Developing the budget is a complicated and lengthy process that requires four out of the five towns, which WRHS serves, to approve. The budget is usually approved by July 1<sup>st</sup> and the principal usually allots to each department the same funds as the previous year. Faculty members do not play an active role in the development of the budget, however, they do generate priority lists of items needed for instruction and learning at the beginning of the school year. These lists are presented by the department heads to the principal, and then, if approved, to the district’s business manager for purchase. When classroom needs exceed the budget, teachers report that they purchase needed items with their personal money. Teachers and students report that many textbooks and novels are either damaged or outdated, forcing teachers to photocopy necessary materials. Students are sometimes asked to purchase their own book or print up a large amount of pages on their own. The school committee reports that they have a five-year plan in place to provide more money for instructional aids

and supplies to the teachers. As a result of their limited involvement in the process, faculty members are not sure of the resources they have to support instruction in their departments, and this negatively impacts their ability to deliver the curriculum effectively and to improve and expand resources and materials available to teachers and students. (school committee, teachers, school leadership team, district leadership)

The school site and plant, mostly, supports the delivery of high quality school programs and services. The school facilities provide the school community with a vast and diverse range of classroom programs, curricular activities, athletic spaces, and faculty workspaces. Over 80 percent of students, staff, and parents believe that the site and plant is conducive to a high quality education. Students may take advantage of a multitude of facilities including performing arts areas, visual art spaces, science labs, the media center, and outdoor recreational and athletic spaces. For performing arts, the building boasts an auditorium, a black box theater, music laboratories, and practice rooms. The media center has computers for use by students during their study periods. The two computer labs in the center are almost always reserved by teachers for class use. However, much of the hardware and software has not been updated since the renovation of the school in 2009. There is also a workspace for teachers within the center, which contains instructional resources. Separate from the classrooms they teach in, teachers have dedicated workspaces, which are shared with colleagues, which may foster collegiality and collaboration. The many conference rooms available for faculty use allow for confidentiality and student privacy. The school is equipped with a number of athletic spaces including the two gymnasiums, an indoor track and field house, a well-equipped weight room, and Project Adventure courses, including a popular rock wall. The building includes a beautiful new space for an architecture program. However, as the program has been eliminated because of budget constraints, students are not able to utilize the space and learning opportunities. The most serious inadequacy in the building is the current infrastructure for Internet use. The bandwidth allotted to the building is insufficient to accommodate the myriad uses required of such an expansive facility, faculty, and student use. At many times during the day, it is difficult to access online services to accomplish necessary tasks for faculty duties, instruction, and learning. Use of the Wi-Fi is not consistent across the school with Wi-Fi limited to offices, teacher workspaces, the media center, and some classrooms. It is clear that the expansive size and the many diverse instructional learning spaces are able to support the delivery and implementation of a wide array of high quality programs, activities, and services, but the technology infrastructure is in serious need of updates for optimal use by faculty and students. The existing technology limits faculty and

students' ability to fully meet the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, Endicott survey, facility tour, district leadership, school leadership team, students, teachers, custodial staff, panel presentation)

The school maintains updated documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. The custodial supervisor keeps records of state inspections, safety measures and storage, and maintenance reports. All areas of the school have adequate ventilation and air quality control. The air filters are replaced on a regular schedule. While the boiler and electrical rooms are functioning properly and are well-maintained, there are storage items from an industrial class and paint present in the boiler room as well as papers and a model of the school in the electrical room. The entire facility is handicap accessible and in compliance with applicable laws. Temperatures in the building are regulated by a central computer system, which the custodial supervisor can override, if necessary. WRHS has 24 operational cameras yet has the capability to expand to 39 cameras. Due to limited funding, these have not been purchased and installed, which is a safety concern because there are areas in the building that cannot be accessed by the existing cameras. Each science laboratory and chemical storage area is equipped with an eyewash station and emergency shower; however, these stations have not been tested for functionality. Additionally, most of the emergency showers lack drains. While the school has detailed and up-to-date records that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations, additional funding to repair broken and poorly functioning equipment and needed repairs and/or replacement of defective equipment will increase the safety of students and staff in the building. (custodial staff, facility tour, teachers, school leadership team, teachers, self-study)

The Wachusett Regional staff actively and collectively engage parents and families as partners in each student's education and reach out to those families who have been less Connect-Ed to the school through different tools and methods. The WRHS website contains a variety of information including the student handbook, guidance news, schedules of events and daily activities, and lists WRHS Core Values, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations, and discipline codes. In addition, many faculty members have websites that parents and students access for course and assignment information. Both the school and central office employ a system called *Connect-Ed*, an automated phone calling system, where all parents and guardians are informed of important school and district information. Teachers reach out to parents via phone

calls, emails, and conferences, with many teachers regularly emailing home about student assignments and important assignment deadlines. Fifty-nine percent of parents and 80 percent of students feel the professional staff actively engages their family as partners in education. The Wachusett staff has implemented various procedures to increase the parental engagement in academic and co-curricular activities through the school website, *PowerSchool*, and by offering forums for discussion such as SIMCO and a faculty council. In addition, liaisons, teachers, and staff through conferences, emails, and phone calls contact parents of students with special needs, IEPs, and accommodations. WRHS offers an Open House and also has monthly guidance and principal chats. As a result of all professional staff's actively engaging parents and families as partners in each student's education and reaching out specifically to those families who have been less Connect-Ed with the school, the school is effective in ensuring students are safe and successful in their learning outcomes. (self-study, committee meeting, parents, teachers, Endicott survey)

Wachusett Regional High School has implemented productive and innovative parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships. Over 70 percent of WRHS staff and 65 percent of parents agree that the school has effective partnerships with parents, community organizations, businesses, and higher education to support student learning. Every Tuesday night there is an engaging science workshop facilitated by scientists from the community, including a Nobel Prize winning scientist. WRHS has a unique partnership program that affords selected students the ability to enrich their learning in specialized areas such as automotive technology, early childhood education, health sciences, restaurant management, technology engineering, fashion and textiles, and graphics communications. It is important to note that some of these programs have been negatively impacted and/or eliminated because of budget constraints. Students at WRHS have adequate opportunities for job shadowing, internships, mentoring, and summer employment. Parents serve on many committees that help support programs and clubs such as the school committee, the school improvement modernization council, booster club, Tempo, Upstage, and the special education advisory council. The school hosts a college and career fair with approximately 90 colleges and universities in attendance. At this fair, a number of community business members are in attendance to provide students with the opportunity to learn about different careers. WRHS has a dual enrollment agreement with Mt. Wachusett Community College and Quinsigamond Community College. Other local institutions, namely Anna Maria and Assumption Colleges, Clark University, and UMASS Amherst, offer educational programs for WRHS teachers.

Given the school's development of productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning, it allows for students to reach beyond the walls of their school and to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century learning outcomes.

(teachers, self-study, community resources for learning subcommittee, facility tour, school leadership team, Endicott survey)

### **Commendations**

1. The dedicated, hardworking, and committed staff that uphold WRHS' educational excellence
2. The experienced, organized, and reliable custodial staff that support the impeccable grounds, facilities, and plant maintenance
3. The extensive use of the school building and grounds by the entire Wachusett school community
4. The expansive space, which supports a wide array of programs and services
5. The effective partnerships and communications with parents that support students' education and learning
6. The effective, diverse, and expansive partnership programs that support a variety of academic areas and post-secondary opportunities
7. The large numbers of students who participate in partnership programs

### **Recommendations:**

1. Provide sufficient funding to support, technology, equipment, replacement of textbooks, instructional materials and supplies
2. Develop and implement a plan to increase funding, time, and resources for professional development
3. Increase funding, planning, and preparation for maintenance and repairs of equipment

4. Develop and implement a long-term maintenance plan for equipment, grounds, and supplies
5. Provide a consistent and adequate level of funding to maintain and upgrade technology to meet student and staffing needs
6. Establish a formal process for teachers and staff to be a part of the budget development and implementation
7. Remove all storage items and flammable materials from the boiler and electrical rooms
8. Develop and implement a plan to periodically test the eye-wash and emergency showers and resolve drainage issues from emergency showers in laboratories
9. Ensure that the security system meets the safety needs of the school and its community
10. Provide more opportunities for parent forums in the evening

## 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 at Wachusett Regional High School. The faculty, school committee, 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 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 Wachusett Regional 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 B on page 85. 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.

Finally, the visiting committee would be remiss if it did not express its appreciation for the hospitality, openness, and candid responses extended to committee members by the school committee, central office and school leadership teams, faculty and staff members, parents, and students. The members of the Wachusett Regional High School community made us feel welcome.

**Wachusett Regional High School  
NEASC Accreditation Visit  
March 9-12, 2014  
Visiting Committee**

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| Stephen E. Mitchell, Chair<br>Retired Principal<br>Chepachet, RI 02814                       | Suzanne Keefe<br>Lowell High School<br>Lowell, MA 01852                |
| Dr. Nicholas Spera, Assistant Chair<br>Marine Science Magnet High School<br>Groton, CT 06340 | Martina Kenyon<br>Nashoba Regional School District<br>Bolton, MA 01740 |
| Jane Burt<br>Plymouth North High School<br>Plymouth, MA 02360                                | Dr. Tiffany Luther<br>Haverhill Public Schools<br>Haverhill, MA 01830  |
| Melanie Fedorowicz<br>Keene High School<br>Keene, NH 02431                                   | Andrea MacIsaac<br>Boston Latin Academy<br>Boston, MA 02121            |
| Theresa Friguglietti<br>Westfield High School<br>Westfield, MA 01085                         | Nathan Prichard<br>Nashoba Regional High School<br>Bolton, MA 01740    |
| Barbara Frost<br>Taconic High School<br>Pittsfield, MA 01201                                 | Nancy Sawyer<br>Tantasqua Regional High School<br>Fiskdale, MA 01518   |
| Kristin Griffiths<br>Shepherd Hill Regional High School<br>Dudley, MA 01571                  | Sophia Sheehan<br>West High School<br>Manchester, NH 03102             |
| Kimberly Hallett<br>Hampshire Regional High School<br>Westhampton, MA 01027                  | Christopher Tebo<br>Spaulding High School<br>Rochester, NH 03868       |
| Anna Hanrahan<br>Marine Science Magnet High School<br>Groton, CT 0634                        |  |

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & 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

## Wachusett Regional High School

### Commendations:

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

1. The use of core values and beliefs in freshman seminar classes
2. The school has clear, challenging, and measurable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
3. The posting and accessibility of the learning expectations and rubrics on the school's main website
4. The faculty, staff, and students that comprise the positive and affirming culture at WRHS
5. The wide variety of co-curricular activities, course offerings, community service opportunities, and alternative education programs
6. The natural inclusion of the core values and beliefs in classroom instruction and school life

#### *Curriculum*

1. The wide variety of opportunities for students to participate in curricular and co-curricular activities
2. The dedicated leadership of department heads and liaisons
3. The resourcefulness of staff to implement the curriculum in the spite of funding deficits
4. The opportunities for authentic student learning

5. The curriculum that emphasizes depth of knowledge and higher-order thinking
6. The analysis of data by many departments that is collected from common assessments to measure student progress toward mastery of the skills and concepts identified in the curriculum guides

### *Instruction*

1. The variety of opportunities for authentic learning experiences through the music and arts, post-graduate, and partnership programs
2. The teachers' strong overall commitment to support all students
3. The teachers' informal collaboration to improve their instructional practices and monitor their effectiveness in the classroom
4. The variety of educational opportunities for students to engage as active and self-directed learners
5. The dedicated faculty pursuit of opportunities for growth, at their own expense, in their area of expertise through the attendance of professional development conferences and through coursework
6. The active role of students in structuring their Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
7. The variety of group activities teachers incorporate into classes

### *Assessment of and for Student Learning*

1. The world languages department consistently uses the written communication and oral communication school-wide rubric on assessments
2. Teachers in some departments give students the opportunity to retake quizzes and amend answers to assignments
3. The common assessment results that are summarized and disseminated by those department chairs to members of the department
4. The specific, timely, and corrective feedback by many teachers to ensure students revise and improve their work

5. The formal criteria used by the district sending schools in determining the placement of incoming ninth grade students
6. Teacher websites that are maintained and provided to the public are clear in their 21<sup>st</sup> learning expectations of what students are expected to know and do
7. The use of technology to formally assess students' work

### ***School Culture and Leadership***

1. The strong sense of community that fosters a supportive educational environment for all stakeholders
2. The diverse collection of clubs and activities that allows for a multitude of opportunities for all students
3. The positive and constructive interpersonal relationships among students, teachers, and staff that create safe learning environments
4. The educational community that supports a challenging and diverse learning environment
5. The strong sense of equity and inclusivity in the learning environment that ensures equal access to school-wide curriculum
6. The school leadership team that functions as a cohesive unit
7. The positive relationships that exist throughout the educational community
8. The willingness of faculty members to expend personal funds to support and provide students with required supplies to complete their assignments
9. The faculty and staff dedication to support the success of all students

### *School Resources for Learning*

1. The multitude of diverse communication formats used to reach families
2. The wide-variety of technological tools utilized effectively by support services staff
3. The positive presence of school resource officer
4. The positive collaboration and school culture promoted through the library
5. The accessible hours for student use of library before, during, and after school
6. The library/media specialist's use of technology to communicate with the student population
7. The wide variety of programs available to special education students
8. The cohesiveness and open communication amongst the special education staff

### *Community Resources for Learning*

1. The dedicated, hardworking, and committed staff that uphold WRHS' educational excellence
2. The experienced, organized, and reliable custodial staff that support the impeccable grounds, facilities, and plant maintenance
3. The extensive use of the school building and grounds by the entire Wachusett school community
4. The expansive space, which supports a wide array of programs and services
5. The effective partnerships and communications with parents that support students' education and learning

6. The effective, diverse, and expansive partnership programs that support a variety of academic areas and post-secondary opportunities
7. The large numbers of students who participate in partnership programs

## **Recommendations:**

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

1. Develop and implement a unified presentation of the core values that can be prominently displayed in classrooms and other areas
2. Develop and implement a practice by which the school's new core values and beliefs about teaching and learning as well as the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations are regularly reviewed and revised by all stakeholders including students
3. Develop and implement a plan to ensure that the core values, beliefs about learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom
4. Ensure that students, parents, and the public are knowledgeable about the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations
5. Utilize data collected on student achievement from the school-wide rubrics to inform curriculum, instruction, and assessment

### *Curriculum*

1. Provide structured time to allow for collaboration and reflection regarding the responsibilities for teaching the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
2. Develop and implement a process for effectively using the school-wide rubrics within and across the existing content curriculum
3. Create and implement a common curriculum template

4. Develop and implement a written curriculum review process to revise all curriculum documents using the new common curriculum template and include guides for each unit of study
5. Ensure that the curriculum includes instructional and assessment strategies that require routine usage of the school-wide rubrics by all teachers
6. Provide the resources needed to fully implement the curriculum
7. Provide dedicated time for staff to align current curriculum to the adopted template and to complete the process for courses that currently have no formal curriculum
8. Implement a process to provide opportunities for cross-curricular planning and learning
9. Provide adequate time and resources for curriculum coordination and vertical articulation between and among all academic areas within the school and district's sending schools

### ***Instruction***

1. Establish and implement a formal process that supports all teachers to consistently examine the alignment of instruction with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
2. Provide structured time for collaborative reflection on instructional practice both within and among departments within the school day
3. Increase opportunities for students to self-assess, including the use of school-wide rubrics, and reflect continuously throughout the school year
4. Budget for, provide, and implement in-house professional development to enhance all areas of instruction
5. Expand technology infrastructure to enable more consistent technology-based instruction

6. Develop formal cross-disciplinary collaboration opportunities by implementing common planning time and inter-disciplinary courses
7. Develop and implement a process with a recognized protocol and designated time to regularly examine student work utilizing formative assessment data to inform instructional practice
8. Provide professional development opportunities relating to use of formative assessment for teachers and school leadership
9. Formalize mentoring program for new teachers

### *Assessment of and for Student Learning*

1. Develop and implement a clear formal process for the use of school-wide rubrics to assess school-wide and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
2. Use school-wide rubrics consistently throughout the school to formally assess student and school-wide progress toward mastering the WRHS 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
3. Ensure that all students have sufficient opportunities to practice and demonstrate proficiency on each of the school-wide expectations
4. Develop and implement a process to communicate individual student progress and the whole school's progress in achieving the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to students, to their families, and to the community
5. Develop and implement a formal process for all teachers to receive results of incoming and current students' standardized testing
6. Analyze student performance data for the purpose of adjusting curriculum and instruction and for identifying students who need additional support
7. Fully integrate the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations into common course assessments

8. Align course-specific rubrics with the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and school-wide rubrics
9. Provide students with analytic rubrics prior to instruction to increase student understanding of course and unit expectations
10. Provide time for formal teacher collaboration, both within and among departments, on assessments and assessment practices
11. Examine data collected from common formative assessments and student work to guide collaborative curriculum decisions in a purposeful and deliberate manner
12. Research and create a school-wide policy on grading and reporting procedures

### *School Culture and Leadership*

1. Establish and implement 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
2. Increase inter-departmental professional development
3. Create opportunities at WRHS for faculty members to explicitly discuss and implement 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations in a collaborative, reflective, and constructive way
4. Include face-to-face feedback sessions and opportunities for reflection in the evaluation process
5. Evaluate current master schedule to more adequately meet the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
6. Ensure that the class size of courses are equitable

7. Develop a formal role description for the principal as instructional leader, which clearly articulates the responsibilities as they pertain to upholding the core values and learning expectations of the school
8. Develop formal structures to engage parents, students, and especially support staff in the decision-making process

### *School Resources for Learning*

1. Increase communication among students, families, and guidance regarding the college planning process
2. Develop and implement a data collection plan that all school personnel can access to better meet the needs of all students, including those at risk
3. Provide and implement professional development time dedicated to reviewing research-based interventions and interpreting data
4. Create and implement a systematic plan that allows teachers to recommend students for additional academic support
5. Implement a plan to ensure the effective delivery of the guidance curriculum and related services
6. Describe in detail how the delivery of services of nursing services are currently meeting the needs of a 2100 pupil high school
7. Design and implement a plan in which special education and regular education have adequate time for collaboration to determine appropriate student support services and to formulate specific guidelines for co-taught classes

## *Community Resources for Learning*

1. Provide sufficient funding to support, technology, equipment, replacement of textbooks, instructional materials and supplies
2. Develop and implement a plan to increase funding, time, and resources for professional development
3. Increase funding, planning, and preparation for maintenance and repairs of equipment
4. Develop and implement a long-term maintenance plan for equipment, grounds, and supplies
5. Provide a consistent and adequate level of funding to maintain and upgrade technology to meet student and staffing needs
6. Establish a formal process for teachers and staff to be a part of the budget development and implementation
7. Remove all storage items and flammable materials from the boiler and electrical rooms
8. Develop and implement a plan to periodically test the eye-wash and emergency showers and resolve drainage issues from emergency showers in laboratories
9. Ensure that the security system meets the safety needs of the school and its community
10. Provide more opportunities for parent forums in the evening