

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

REPORT OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE

LITCHFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

LITCHFIELD, CONNECTICUT

October 3-6, 2004

Robert Hale, CHAIR

Thomas DeCorletto, ASSISTANT CHAIR

Timothy Breslin, PRINCIPAL

STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS

The Distribution, Use, and Scope of the Visiting Committee Report

The Commission on Public Secondary Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges considers this visiting committee report of Litchfield High School to be a privileged document submitted by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges to the principal of the school and by the principal to the state department of education. Distribution of the report within the school community is the responsibility of the school principal. The final visiting committee report must be released in its entirety within sixty (60) days 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 Litchfield High School in terms of the school's stated mission and the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. Neither the total report nor any of its subsections is to be considered an evaluation of any individual staff member but rather a professional appraisal of the school as it appeared to the visiting team.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Statement on Limitations	1
Introduction.....	4
Preparation for the Evaluation visit	5
The Process Used by the Visiting Committee	6
School and Community Profile.....	8
School’s Statement of Mission	18
Overview of Findings	19
Mission and Expectations for Student Learning.....	21
Copy of the Standard	21
Conclusions.....	21
Commendations	24
Recommendations.....	25
Curriculum	26
Copy of the Standard	26
Conclusions.....	27
Commendations	31
Recommendations.....	31
Instruction	33
Copy of the Standard	33
Conclusions.....	34
Commendations	40
Recommendations.....	41
Assessment.....	42
Copy of the Standard	42
Conclusions.....	43
Commendations	49
Recommendations.....	50
Leadership & Organization	51
Copy of the Standard	51
Conclusions.....	52
Commendations	57
Recommendations.....	58

TABLE OF CONTENTS
continued

School Resources for Learning	59
Copy of the Standard	59
Guidance Services.....	59
Health Services	60
Library Information Services.....	60
Special Education Services.....	60
Conclusions.....	61
Commendations	69
Recommendations.....	70
Community Resources for Learning	71
Copy of the Standard	71
Conclusions.....	72
Commendations	77
Recommendations.....	78
Follow-Up Responsibilities	79
Substantive Change	81

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 five Commissions: the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE), the Commission on Independent Schools (CIS), the Commission on Public Secondary Schools (CPSS), the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions (CTCI), and the Commission on Public Elementary Schools (CPES).

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 Commission. Those Standards are:

Teaching and Learning Standards

- Mission and Expectations for Student Learning
- Curriculum
- Instruction
- Assessment of Student Learning

Support Standards

- Leadership and Organization
- 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 Commission'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 Commission in the Follow-Up process. Continued accreditation requires that the school be reevaluated at least once every ten years and that it show continued progress addressing identified needs.

Preparation for the Evaluation 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 Litchfield High School, a committee of 16 members with the principal serving in an *ex officio* capacity supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned all teachers and administrators in the school to appropriate subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities, and facilities available for young people. In addition to faculty members, the self-study committees included two non-certified staff, seven students, seven parents, four central office professionals and two citizens.

The self-study of Litchfield High School extended over a period of 16 school months from January 2003 to May 2004.

The visiting committee was pleased to note that the student council and the parent teacher organization joined the professional staff in the self-study deliberations.

Public schools evaluated by the Commission 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 Commission, Litchfield High School also used questionnaires developed by the Office for Research and Education at the University of Maine to reflect the concepts contained in the Standards for Accreditation. These materials provided discussion items for a comprehensive assessment of the school by the professional staff during the self-study.

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

The Process Used by the Visiting Committee

A visiting committee of 16 evaluators was assigned by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate the Litchfield High School in light of the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The Committee members spent four days in (city/town/district), reviewed the self-study documents which had been prepared for their examination, and met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students, and parents to determine the degree to which the school meets the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. Since the evaluators represented public

schools, the state department of education, central office administrators, and a board of education, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Litchfield High School.

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

- ◆ review of the school's self-study materials
- ◆ a total of 40 hours of classroom observation
- ◆ numerous informal observations in and around the school
- ◆ tours of the facility
- ◆ shadowing of 14 students for a half day
- ◆ individual meetings with 30 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 on the report was agreed to by team 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 its judgment will be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning and to better meet Commission Standards.

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

Litchfield has approximately 8,316 residents, according to the 2000 census, is located 34 miles west of Hartford in the northwestern corner of the state of Connecticut and covers 57.3 square miles. It is approximately two hours from New York City and two and a half hours from Boston. The town is comprised of five villages: Litchfield, East Litchfield, Bantam, Milton, and Northfield with the entire town being called Litchfield. It is the county seat with the Superior Courthouse located in the center of town. Today, the town is considered a rural community with a portion of residents commuting to Torrington, Waterbury, Hartford, New Milford, and New York City.

Litchfield, founded in 1721, attracts many visitors to view its fine examples of eighteenth century homes, churches, and the first law school in the nation, Tapping Reeve Law School. The town, because of its historical roots, is part of an antique shops corridor, which includes several nearby towns. In addition approximately 900 businesses operate within the town. The Litchfield green is well-known and is particularly popular in the late summer and early fall when many tourists visit the town to experience its beauty during “leaf-peeping” season. Litchfield also has various community-sponsored activities. During the first weekend of June, the town hosts the internationally popular Litchfield Hills Road Race. Litchfield Performing Arts sponsors both a piano competition and a late summer jazz festival. Both feature world-renowned performing artists.

The Litchfield Public Schools, as well as the community, benefit from several area resources. The White Memorial Foundation is a 4,000-acre wildlife sanctuary and environmental center. The foundation’s library and open space provide year-round educational, athletic, and recreational opportunities. The Connecticut Junior Republic

shares its swimming facility with the Litchfield High School Swim Team. The Litchfield Community Center provides a venue for Litchfield Public School groups, other area school groups, and residents to gather for social events, poetry readings, and community meetings. The Litchfield Historical Society collects and exhibits items of historical significance. It also serves as a research resource to the area schools and, along with Litchfield Performing Arts and the Oliver Wolcott Library, contributes to system-wide curriculum projects. A state regional educational center, Education Connection, is located in town and provides services, programs for students, and professional development opportunities.

According to the census of 2000, the median per capita income in Litchfield was \$30,096. The median household income was listed as \$58,418. The same census gave the unemployment rate as 1.4% with 2.5% of families having incomes below the poverty level. 5.4% of families had incomes above \$200,000. However, since the 2000 census, BE Aerospace Company, the only major industry in town, closed and moved its production to a sister plant in Ireland. This has negatively impacted the grand list and local merchants. More than 84% of parents of Litchfield High School students have high school diplomas, and 50% have earned degrees beyond that level. The population is of Western European heritage and is 96% white.

In the year 2002-2003, Litchfield spent \$8,746 per student. Schools in Litchfield's Education Reference Group (ERG) spent \$8,822 per student the same year and the state per pupil average expenditure was \$9,404 for the same year. The school budget which has increased in each of the last five years increased 1.85% for the 2002-

2003 school year. That budget required three referenda to pass. The increases have been insufficient to maintain programs and initiate new ones while satisfying fixed costs.

The tax base is funded primarily with property taxes. 77.6% of the 2001-2002 budget was allocated to the schools and 71.2% of the 2002-2003 budget was similarly allocated. The level of state funding has decreased significantly from 24% in years past to 8% in most recent years. Local revenues fund 90% of the operating cost of the schools. Federal grants and tuition make up the remaining 2% of educational funding.

Litchfield High School opened in 1956 as a junior-senior facility for grades 7-12. When the separate Litchfield Junior High School opened in 1968, the school became a senior high school for grades 9-12. The high school was renovated and expanded in 1976. In the fall of 1991, in response to declining system-wide enrollment, Litchfield High School again became a 7-12 school. Since that time, however, enrollment has been on the rise. In the 2002-2003 school year, the district school population was 1,410. With a student body of 663 in the 2002-2003 school year and a population of 682 in 2003-2004, Litchfield High School currently enjoys a stable enrollment.

There are several non-public schools within the town of Litchfield: The Country School, a Montessori school for grades Pre-K through Grade 6; The Forman School, a private residential and non-residential high school; The Connecticut Junior Republic, a residential treatment facility for troubled boys; and Touchstone, a residential facility for at-risk girls. After completing Grade 8, Litchfield students have the opportunity to attend Oliver Wolcott State Technical School or the Vocational-Agricultural Program of Wamogo Regional High School. Most students choose to attend Litchfield High School.

However, in the 2002 –2003 school year, 7 students out of 124, or 5.6%, chose to attend non-public schools for their high school education.

Two elementary schools serve Litchfield: Center School for grades Pre-K through 3 and Litchfield Intermediate School for grades 4 through 6. Although Litchfield continues to receive student applications, building constraints preclude the admission of non-resident tuition students. Student average daily attendance rate at Litchfield High School for the 2001-2002 school year was 93.7%. The school's dropout rate for the 2001-2002 school year was 0.6 %. More than 98% of the members of the Class of 2002 earned their high school diplomas. In the Class of 2002, which graduated 87 students, 67% attended four-year colleges, 5% attended two-year colleges, 1.1% joined the military, and 26.9% went directly into the workforce.

The average student-teacher ratio for the school year 2002-2003 was 12 to 1. Certified staff, in various disciplines are daily shared between the middle and high school. Some teachers also teach in the Litchfield Intermediate School. Some positions - the school psychologist, the speech therapist, the social worker, the library media director, and the enrichment teacher -- serve all three schools in the district.

In 2002-2003, the average class size for grades 7 and 8 (middle school) was 21. The average student load for middle school teachers was 104. The middle school operates on a 40-minute period schedule. A passing time of 5 minutes is provided only every other period due to the high school's block scheduling. Middle school English and math group students in three levels; reading groups them in two levels. Grouping designation is influenced by student past performance, teacher recommendation, and parental requests. Science and social studies maintain heterogeneous groups. Forty-minute team

meetings are scheduled daily to address teacher concerns about students, to meet with parents, and to collaborate in a common planning time. Middle school teachers of the arts, computer science, technology education, food science, world language, physical education, and library media are precluded from attendance at these meetings by their teaching schedules. There is a 30-minute flex time parallel to lunch for middle school students to seek extra help, to visit the library, and to participate in physical and other selected activities.

In 2002-2003, grades 9-12 (high school) the average class size was 16. The average student load for high school teachers was 51 per semester. Grades 9-12 operate on a 4x4 block schedule. Students are required to take four courses each semester with the exception of seniors who can reduce their yearly course load to seven courses. Students are in class for 80 minutes with a 5-minute passing time. A 35-minute flex period at the end of each school day allows for extra help, make-up work, AP reviews, band sectionals, and a wide range of other activities. There is no common planning time for high school teachers by department or grade. Because department chairs teach a full load of classes they have little time to collaborate and foster planning within their departments. Several curriculum areas lack department chairs.

When selecting courses students in grades 9-12 have a variety of options. Most content areas offer foundation courses at Level III, college preparatory courses at Level II, and honors/AP courses at Level I. Students have the opportunity, according to their ability and skills, to enroll in various course levels. For example, a student may enroll in a Level I course in one content area and a Level III course in a different content area. This flexibility permits grouping among students with differing abilities and interests.

Students may change from one level to another in a content area depending upon academic performance and skill. In 2002-2003 the percentage of students taking at least one AP/honors courses (Level I) was 40%. The percentage of students in special education courses was 8.4% and there were no students in bilingual/ESL classes.

Additional educational opportunities are available. Students can receive three University of Connecticut credits as well as one Litchfield High School credit for History 101. A variety of available “Tech Prep” courses can enable students to earn credit both at Northwestern Connecticut Community College and at Litchfield High School. Litchfield Performing Arts sponsors Project Poetry Live for students in 7th grade. The 7th grade participates in a ropes course located at Education Connection. Community business leaders serve on a business education advisory council. They present a variety of individual career exploration opportunities and employment for students as well as serving as resources for the 11th grade job shadowing experience. The Litchfield Rotary Club has sponsored two faculty members on separate educational journeys to India and to Nigeria. These teachers share their experiences with many classes and community organizations. While there is no community service graduation requirement, there is a community service component offered as part of the required Civics & Personal Finance course. Through this venue, many students volunteer throughout the community. Peer educators, a volunteer organization at Litchfield High School, is active within the school and surrounding communities.

Average standardized test scores compare favorably with state and national averages. Eighth grade students in the 2002-2003 school year scored above goal on the

Connecticut Mastery Tests in reading, math, and writing. They scored at least 10 points above the state averages. High school students also tested strongly on the SATs. At 539 (Math) and 543 (Verbal), the Class of 2003 scored above the state average of 514 (Math) and 512 (Verbal) and above the national average of 519 (Math) and 507 (Verbal). On the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT), the Class of 2004 had 53% at goal in math, 63.5% at goal in science, 65% at goal in reading, and 62% at goal in writing. The state averages were: math 44%, science 43%, reading 45%, and writing 51%. At present 27 credits are required for graduation. In response to PA 166, beginning with the Class of 2006, students must demonstrate competency in communication, problem-solving, civics, and technology in order to graduate. Students will be able to demonstrate this competency through CAPT, course work, or alternative assessments.

Each year high school students are recognized at an academic awards reception for their scholastic and artistic achievements and community service. Students receive plaques, medals, and/or monetary awards. Some of these awards are sponsored by local businesses, and others come from personal and nonprofit organizations. Student athletic accomplishments are also recognized at an annual awards ceremony. Litchfield High School has chapters of the National Honor Society, Art Honor Society, Technology Student Association, Music Honor Society, Future Business Leaders of America, and the Foreign Language Honor Society. Eighth grade students are recognized for their academic accomplishments in a “Moving Up” ceremony. Middle school athletes are also honored in an annual ceremony for their achievements. In addition, middle school students have been regularly recognized with “Make a Difference Awards” for their contributions in making Litchfield High School a better place.

In the 2002-2003 school year, Litchfield High School had 62 teachers and 14 instructional aides. Daily teacher attendance rate for the past two years exceeds 97%. Faculty education levels are high: 81.7% hold a master's, master's plus or doctoral degree. Litchfield High School faculty members have participated in and received Celebration of Excellence Awards for various curriculum projects. One teacher received a Presidential Award for Excellence in Science Education in the 2001-2002 school year. Litchfield High School was named a National School of Excellence in 1996.

While Litchfield High School does not have a school improvement plan, initiatives have been reflected in building goals and have included the use of technology to improve instruction and enhance classroom management; a focus on respect and responsibility to improve and maintain a healthy school environment; the use of interdisciplinary projects to foster "The Big Ideas;" the improvement of literacy skills for "Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum" and the use of authentic assessment. The curriculum committee of the BOE has chosen the improvement of reading comprehension as a district focus for the 2003-2004 school year. The regular use of the rubrics developed from the expectations for student learning, with emphasis on the reading rubric, is the planned Litchfield High School goal of the 2003-2004 school year.

Issues, concerns, and challenges face Litchfield High School in several areas. Operating a grade 7-12 high school on two different schedules with shared staff is a challenge. This situation limits the amount of instructional time scheduled for middle school classes. In addition, the requirement of department chairs to teach a full load of classes remains an unresolved issue from the 1994 NEASC evaluation. That, along with some curriculum areas functioning without department chairs, makes the improvement of

student learning through instructional support a challenge. Also of concern, the lack of a unified school improvement plan prevents an encompassing expansion of present building goals and action plans.

Another challenge is the need to renovate or replace the facility. The increasing cost of maintaining and enhancing an appropriate education in an aging, outdated, and crowded high school troubles students, school personnel, and residents and was so indicated in the NEASC survey of these groups. The first study and plan to address this facility concern was developed in the 1999-2000 school year and was defeated in a town referendum that year. The second study and plan was accepted in a town vote in the spring of 2002. The vote was rescinded, however, in the summer of 2002. In the 2002-2003 school year, a new town planning committee was elected to study options for improvement, and this committee also failed to secure a “yes vote” on their recommended plan. The present committee was elected in the summer of 2003 and its study, which is ongoing, includes plans for renovation and expansion to both the high school and intermediate school.

The reduced financial support from the state and federal governments, along with the little growth in the community’s commercial tax base, means that homeowners will continue to be asked to allocate an increasing percentage of their incomes to maintain and improve the schools. According to the 2000 census, Litchfield has an aging population and consequently fewer of such homeowners are parents of students in school.

Communication involving all interested groups remains a concern. The biggest challenge Litchfield faces in the 21st century is maintaining the quality of its education in an

economic downturn while managing the continuing financial responsibility of its taxpayers.

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

Litchfield High School Mission Statement

The mission of the Litchfield High School Community is to work together to graduate knowledgeable, skillful, and productive individuals.

Expectations for Student Learning

The LHS Graduate utilizes his or her knowledge, skills and talents to:

- Communicate effectively
- Solve problems effectively
- Apply technology appropriately
- Contribute to Society
- Make informed life choices

Overview of Findings

Although the conclusions of the visiting committee on the school's adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation appear in various sections of this report, the committee wishes to highlight some findings in the paragraphs that follow. These findings are not intended to be a summary of the report.

The visiting committee was impressed with Litchfield High School, the administrative team, the faculty and staff, and the student body. During the committee's review of the self-study documents, meetings with administrators, parents, teachers, staff and students, observation in classrooms and around the school, and reviewing a variety of student work, it developed a good sense of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

The student work showed a variety of assignments and demonstrated a generally high level of expectations for student work. Assignments were accompanied by assessment instruments that helped students and parents understand the expectations of each assignment and how they would be graded.

The school has developed a broad and comprehensive mission statement and expectations for student learning that it is striving to realize. The expectations for student learning are difficult to apply directly to measurable goals for student achievement and will need to be expanded upon so that the school's curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments can be appropriately aligned to the mission.

The committee was impressed with the level of caring and concern among school staff for Litchfield High School's students. Students and parents are able to communicate easily with teachers and administrators. Students were cooperative, friendly and productive throughout the evaluation visit and represented their school and community

well. The committee did not perceive any problems with student discipline and was most impressed with the overall atmosphere at the school.

During classroom observations while the committee was conducting the visit it perceived that a greater variety of instructional strategies and assessment techniques would help students learn more effectively. A wider variety of instructional strategies and assessment techniques appeared to be more prevalent among advanced and honors classes than for students in less demanding courses.

The committee recognized the limitations that the school building has put on the development of school programs and was glad to know that plans have been approved for renovations and expansion. These long-needed facility upgrades will have a positive impact on the school as it continues to pursue its mission. Along with the community support for the building project, the school will need the community's support for its annual budget. The recent budget climate has been detrimental to the school's ability to serve its students. The town's recent pattern of multiple referenda and reduced operating budgets for the schools will, if continued, only hamper the school's ability to achieve the mission and expectations for student learning.

Teaching and Learning Standard

1

Mission and Expectations for Student Learning

The school's mission statement describes the essence of what the school as a community of learners is seeking to achieve. The expectations for student learning are based on and drawn from the school's mission statement. These expectations are the fundamental goals by which the school continually assesses the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Every component of the school community must focus on enabling all students to achieve the school's expectations for student learning.

1. The mission statement and expectations for student learning shall be developed by the school community and approved and supported by the professional staff, the school board, and any other school-wide governing organization.
2. The school's mission statement shall represent the school community's fundamental values and beliefs about student learning.
3. The school shall define school-wide academic, civic, and social learning expectations that:
 - are measurable;
 - reflect the school's mission.
4. For each academic expectation in the mission the school shall have a targeted level of successful achievement identified in a rubric.
5. The school shall have indicators by which it assesses the school's progress in achieving school-wide civic and social expectations.
6. The mission statement and the school's expectations for student learning shall guide the procedures, policies, and decisions of the school and shall be evident in the culture of the school.
7. The school shall review regularly the mission statement and expectations for student learning using a variety of data to ensure that they reflect student needs, community expectations, the district mission, and state and national standards.

Conclusions

Litchfield High School's mission statement concisely articulates the goals of the school and reflects the philosophy of the community. The school's mission is reflective of the district philosophy and is aligned with the recently adopted district mission. The

general agreement concerning the underlying values of the Litchfield community will allow the mission statement to focus the decision-making and school improvement process at the school in the coming years. (*self-study, principal, panel presentation*)

The expectations for student learning delineate five major expectations for students: to communicate and solve problems effectively, contribute to society, apply technology appropriately, and make informed life choices. These expectations reflect academic, civic, and social areas in a broad way but do not delineate the specific learning outcomes required for mastery. The breadth of each expectation makes it difficult to determine the specific skills, concepts, and understandings that all students are required to demonstrate. While the curricular offerings and level of student achievement at Litchfield High School reflect a rigorous level of expectation, those standards are not delineated in the expectations for student learning. Greater clarity and specificity regarding the expectations for student learning will help the school assist all students in achieving those standards. (*self-study, school publications, board of education*)

Litchfield High School's mission statement was developed during the 2001-02 school year and grew from the previous philosophy and objectives that had last been updated five years earlier. At the time it was developed, the school district did not have its own mission statement, although every effort was made to align the mission to the prevailing philosophy and practices of the district. The mission and expectations were developed with input from a variety of school constituencies, a committee comprised of teachers, a board of education member, parents, students, staff, and members of the greater community worked over the course of the school year to craft the mission and expectations. The mission statement and expectations for student learning have been

approved by the faculty and the Litchfield Board of Education. (*self-study, steering committee, principal*)

Litchfield High School has developed a graduation competency requirement that amplifies the expectations for student learning. This document integrates the expectations with the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) and the requirements of Connecticut Public Act 166 which requires that schools develop graduation competencies that incorporate student performance on the CAPT. This document delineates the ways that students can demonstrate competency in each expectation. Rather than specifically state what all students should know and be able to do, the graduation competencies identify credits that must be earned and standards that must be met on various assessments rather than delineate the specific skills, competencies, concepts, and understandings that students must demonstrate. The identification of specific learning outcomes is a key component to the cycle of curriculum development, student instruction, and assessment. (*self-study, school publications, principal*)

Litchfield High School is beginning to collect data that can be used to drive improvements in teaching and learning as well as review and revise the school mission and expectations. English teachers use common texts and assignments to assess student achievement across instructional levels. Results of the Connecticut Mastery Test, Connecticut Academic Performance Test, Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholastic Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), SAT IIs, and advanced placement tests all inform the school about student progress related to state and national standards. The principal conducts a yearly survey of students, teachers,

and parents about their perceptions related to teaching and learning and school atmosphere. These and other data can have a powerful impact on assessment of the effectiveness of the mission and expectations. The school does not currently have an identified process or procedure to review and revise the mission and expectations, however. (*self-study, staff members, principal*)

The mission and expectations have been widely disseminated and discussed at a variety of school forums. The school mission is prominently displayed on a banner near the school entry and in each classroom. School publications as well as meetings with students, parents, and teachers have been used to publicize and create ownership among school constituencies. While the school community ascribes to and is cognizant of the mission and expectations, their relatively recent adoption combined with a recent change in school administration have hampered the school's efforts to make the mission the primary impetus for decision-making and improvement at Litchfield High School. (*panel presentation, self-study, principal*)

Commendations

1. The broad representation of the school community in crafting the mission statement and expectations for student learning
2. The widespread display, publication, and discussion of the mission statement and expectations for student learning
3. The recognition in the mission statement of the school "community" which accurately describes the atmosphere at Litchfield High School

Recommendations

1. Develop a document and associated rubrics that define, in specific, measurable ways, the skills, competencies, concepts, and understandings that students will demonstrate to ensure achievement of the expectations for student learning
2. Create a clear linkage between the expectations for student learning and classroom curriculum, instruction, and assessment in each curricular area
3. Develop and implement a plan to regularly revise the mission statement and expectations for student learning reflecting conclusions made from analyzing student achievement data
4. Ensure that the mission statement and expectations for student learning serve as the benchmark for the decision-making and school improvement process in all areas

Teaching and Learning Standard

2

Curriculum

The curriculum, which includes coursework, co-curricular activities, and other school-approved educational experiences, is the school's formal plan to fulfill its mission statement and expectations for student learning. The curriculum links the school's beliefs, its expectations for student learning, and its instructional practices. The strength of that link is dependent upon the professional staff's commitment to and involvement in a comprehensive, ongoing review of the curriculum.

1. Each curriculum area shall identify those school-wide academic expectations for which it is responsible.
2. The curriculum shall be aligned with the school-wide academic expectations and shall ensure that all students have sufficient opportunity to practice and achieve each of those expectations.
3. The written curriculum shall:
 - prescribe content;
 - integrate relevant school-wide learning expectations;
 - identify course-specific learning goals;
 - suggest instructional strategies;
 - suggest assessment techniques including the use of school-wide rubrics.
4. The curriculum shall engage all students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking as well as provide opportunities for the authentic application of knowledge and skills.
5. The curriculum shall:
 - be appropriately integrated;
 - emphasize depth of understanding over breadth of coverage.
6. The school shall provide opportunities for all students to extend learning beyond the normal course offerings and the school campus.
7. There shall be effective curricular coordination and articulation between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district.

8. Instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, staffing levels, and the resources of the library/media center shall be sufficient to allow for the implementation of the curriculum.
9. The professional staff shall be actively involved in the ongoing development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum based on assessments of student performance in achieving the school's academic expectations and course-specific learning goals.
10. The school shall commit sufficient time, financial resources, and personnel to the development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum.
11. Professional development activities shall support the development and implementation of the curriculum.

Conclusions

Updated written curriculum documents that guide content, instruction, and assessment are available in all subject areas. Each department has identified a common core of learning and expectations for all students using the “Big Ideas”, a curriculum development model for which teachers have received training. However, curriculum areas at Litchfield High School cannot identify those expectations for which they are responsible because of the lack of specificity in the expectations for student learning and the absence of a separate document that defines those expectations. While many curricula link directly to the Connecticut Framework, this format is not consistent throughout all areas. As a result, though some of the guides are thorough and detailed, they do not clearly connect with the school’s mission and expectation statement. (*teachers, observations, self-study, curriculum materials, students*)

Litchfield High School’s detailed program of studies outlines the many courses available. These extensive and comprehensive offerings include twelve advanced placement courses as well as a variety of college prep and honors courses. For the high school, the curriculum is delivered with a four-by-four block schedule format requiring students to enroll in eight courses per year. The middle school curriculum with fewer elective offerings is delivered during an eight period day, each class lasting approximately forty minutes. There

is rigorous content in the curriculum in some areas of the Litchfield High School curriculum guides. Many opportunities for authentic application of knowledge and skills are apparent in a variety of academic and co-curricular endeavors. There are numerous examples of students being honored for their prowess in areas such as academic competitions, writing, and art shows. Even though honors or advanced courses are available to many students throughout grades 7-12, however, those enrolled in college prep or general classes do not appear to be provided the same level of intellectual stimulation necessary for them to fully apply their knowledge and to develop higher order thinking skills. Despite the comprehensive offerings, the lack of specific curricular connection to the expectations for student learning makes it difficult for students to determine if they are successfully achieving the expectations.

(students, standards committee, self-study)

Teachers provide students with some interdisciplinary opportunities. In the senior high school, the math and art departments work together to design and produce geometric clay models; the business, art, and world language departments collaborate on pottery and marketing projects, and the art and business departments team up in a logo design project. The high school has also implemented two integrated courses available to all students. While middle school students are provided more numerous and varied opportunities for interdisciplinary instruction, many high school students are afforded fewer opportunities to do the same. Lack of regular collaboration within and across disciplines makes a systematic development of an integrated curriculum difficult. The result is content-driven curriculum which provides students with a wide knowledge base but less depth of understanding or project-based learning. *(student shadowing, standards committee, self-study)*

There are extensive opportunities to extend students' learning beyond course offerings and the school campus at Litchfield High School including cooperation with colleges and universities although there are fewer opportunities for middle school students.

A wide range of curricular and co-curricular activities such as cross-age teaching (where high school students teach those in younger grades), job shadowing, cultural field trips, student exchanges, clubs, and a wide variety of interscholastic sports programs provide an opportunity for students to apply skills and knowledge outside of the regular on-campus programs. (*parents, students, self-study*)

Coordination and articulation are well established between Litchfield High School and its “feeder” school. A curriculum map outlining the skills and content for each grade level in all academic areas has been developed, and there have been recent district-wide K-12 meetings to address content and skills. The school principals are primarily responsible to oversee and coordinate curriculum development and revision at each school level, and the science department chair has recently become the grades 7-12 curriculum coordinator. Curricular coordination and articulation also exist informally in some areas. There is a commitment to provide team planning time in grades seven and eight, but the lack of a formal plan to address curricular issues between grade levels and disciplines makes actual coordination and articulation difficult. Furthermore, because the school mission and expectations for student learning are not linked to curriculum, it is not clear which academic area is responsible for each of the student expectations. The lack of a formal procedure and irregular communication make it difficult to ensure that all expectations for student learning are being addressed. (*school leadership, curriculum guides, self-study*)

The adequacy of resources (textbooks, supplies, technology, etc) varies by grade, department, and course. The result is that some classes do not have adequate means to implement the curriculum. Specifically, not all classes have sufficient or current textbooks, implementation of authentic or hands-on activities is limited by availability of supplies, and the use of computer labs is limited due to scheduling conflicts or class size. The media print

collections are adequate to support the curriculum. *(facility tour, teachers, student shadowing, survey information)*

At Litchfield High School, curriculum review and evaluation takes place in a sporadic way that does not currently consider student performance, assessment, and the school's academic expectations. Consequently, educators are not able to ensure that all students are provided with a curriculum to achieve the goals and expectations described in the mission statement. Recently, a more systematic review process has started with release time for departments to review and revise curriculum. The continuation and extension of this process across academic areas and grade levels K-12 will allow teachers to make more relevant revisions to the curriculum. *(self-study, meetings with teachers, survey information)*

The Litchfield School District has devoted some financial resources to the review and evaluation of curriculum. Over the past two years, release time has been provided to allow departments common time to work together on curriculum development. However, those academic areas with department heads have seen the most progress in this area and, in general, significantly more time is needed to achieve major curricular revision. Because some academic areas do not have the leadership of a department chair, their curriculum revision process is not proceeding with the same efficiency as those who have the identified leadership. *(teachers, self-study, school leadership teams)*

The professional staff is actively involved in the curriculum development and revision process. All teachers are involved in this process, but there is no formal plan that outlines their role in the process, nor is there a description of how the process should proceed. The professional staff is eager to work together to provide the best delivery of curriculum to their students. A formal plan would guide a systemic cycle of review and revision, and all teachers would know their role in the process. *(self-study, panel presentation, board of education)*

Professional development activities support the development and implementation of the curriculum on a limited basis. Teachers are provided with the opportunity to attend off-campus workshops of their choice. When Litchfield High School adopted the “Big Ideas” format they were trained in this method of curriculum writing. Currently, there is no formal process to acquaint newly hired staff members with their role in the development, implementation, and revision of the curriculum. In-house professional development activities are limited and do not provide teachers a method to develop planned, on-going, systematic, and integrated curriculum. (*self-study, teachers, central office administrators*)

Commendations

1. The outstanding commitment of school staff members that helps students achieve academic and co-curricular successes
2. The varied opportunities available for students through advanced and AP classes as well as independent studies
3. The wide variety of opportunities to extend student learning beyond normal course offerings and the school campus
4. The curricula of required courses in Computer Applications, Civics, and Personal Financial Management that directly support expectations of student learning
5. The quality and frequency of fine arts performances and exhibitions in the community that provide authentic experiences and opportunities for students
6. The active role of teacher leaders in promoting improvement of curriculum

Recommendations

1. Revise curriculum guides to align directly with the expectations for student learning and integrate critical thinking and content application skills at all levels, courses, and grades

2. Develop a written formal plan for curriculum development, implementation, and revision K-12
3. Establish a leadership model to provide curriculum development and revision throughout all areas
4. Plan and implement ongoing and systematic professional development to address identified curriculum needs
5. Identify which curricular areas are responsible for specific aspects of Litchfield High School's mission statement and expectations for student learning
6. Ensure that all students are engaged in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking as well as have opportunities for the authentic application of knowledge and skills

Teaching and Learning Standard

3

Instruction

The quality of instruction in a school is the single most important factor affecting the quality of student learning, the achievement of expectations for student learning, the delivery of the curriculum, and the assessment of student progress. Instructional practices must be grounded in the school's mission and expectations for student learning, supported by research in best practice, and refined and improved based on identified student needs. Teachers are expected to be reflective about their instructional strategies and to collaborate with their colleagues about instruction and student learning.

1. Instructional strategies shall be consistent with the school's mission statement and expectations for student learning.
2. Instructional strategies shall:
 - personalize instruction;
 - make connections across disciplines;
 - engage students as active learners;
 - engage students as self-directed learners;
 - involve all students in higher order thinking to promote depth of understanding;
 - provide opportunities for students to apply knowledge or skills;
 - promote student self-assessment and self-reflection.
3. Teachers shall use feedback from a variety of sources including other teachers, students, supervisors, and parents as a means of improving instruction.
4. Teachers shall be expert in their content area, knowledgeable about current research on effective instructional approaches, and reflective about their own practices.
5. Discussion of instructional strategies shall be a significant part of the professional culture of the school.
6. Technology shall be integrated into and supportive of teaching and learning.
7. The school's professional development program shall be guided by identified instructional needs and shall provide opportunities for teachers to develop and improve their instructional strategies.
8. Teacher supervision and evaluation processes shall be used to improve instruction for the purposes of enhancing student learning and meeting student needs.

Conclusions

The staff at Litchfield High School strives to fulfill the school's mission for all students "to graduate as knowledgeable, skillful and productive individuals". Expectations for student learning are further defined through the Big Ideas embedded in the school's curricula. These Big Ideas/expectations for student learning are implemented through a variety of instructional strategies that are listed in course curriculum documents. Hands-on projects, co-operative learning, small group work, teacher and student-directed instruction, independent projects, cross-age teaching, peer tutoring, and inquiry are used to engage students. These instructional practices are widely employed in the areas of technology, business, art, music, world languages, and consumer education. However, there is still a strong emphasis on teacher-directed lessons in many classrooms. Widespread use of a greater variety of student-centered strategies will improve the engagement of all students. (*observations, self-study, student shadowing*)

The Litchfield High School Mission Statement and Expectations for Student Learning were adopted and implemented after the development of many curricula so the Big Ideas for student performance and their corresponding instructional strategies do not necessarily align with the school's mission statement and expectations. As a result, the mission statement and expectations for student learning have not yet had significant impact on improving instructional practices. As the staff clearly defines the instructional strategies necessary to facilitate achievement of expectations of student learning, student learning will be enhanced. (*classroom observations, self-study, student shadowing*)

A variety of instructional strategies helps to personalize instruction for every student. Students in grades 9-12 attend a daily flex period with their assigned advisor. Teachers of grades 7 and 8 meet daily to discuss individual student needs and instructional practice. Many teachers of language arts conference with students on a one-to-one basis to discuss their writing. Parents are partners in individualizing instruction. There is communication with parents through progress reports, conferences, e-mail, and phone communication. The culture of the school indicates excellent rapport among teachers, students, and parents. However, currently increasing class sizes and limitations of space are becoming a detriment to the personalization of instruction. Only 57% of Litchfield High students feels that teachers are tailoring instruction to their learning needs. As the building project comes to fruition, increased space should help to facilitate improved personalization of student learning. (*self-study, student work, students*)

Teachers have been encouraged to create interdisciplinary projects as a school goal in 2002-2003, and the staff developed a K-12 curriculum map to facilitate interdisciplinary learning. As a result, interdisciplinary projects are numerous in grades 7 and 8 and one interdisciplinary course has also been implemented for grades 9-12. This course, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, integrates math, English, and critical thinking. Some departments at the high school level such as world language and business have created successful interdisciplinary projects as well. Lack of collaboration among departments hinders development of interdisciplinary courses for grades 9 – 12. Integration of technology in all disciplines is a strength at Litchfield High School.

Beginning in the 2003-2004 school year, the staff adopted a school-wide goal for the improvement of student reading comprehension. A school-wide reading rubric is

being implemented to foster reading instruction across the disciplines. The principal and the reading consultant are collaborating with teachers to provide support and training in reading instruction. This year the entire staff is reading and discussing Chris Tovani's book Why Do I Have to Teach Reading? (*self-study, teachers, leadership team*)

Although school-wide rubrics for writing, listening, speaking, viewing, technology, and problem-solving exist, implementation of these rubrics will follow a full implementation of the reading rubric. Complete use of these school-wide rubrics will enrich the integration of writing, problem-solving, listening, viewing and technology across the curriculum. (*self-study, teachers, leadership team*)

Debate team, Envirothon, Language Internship Teaching Experience (LITE), department-based independent study programs, and cross-age teaching are examples of student-directed learning at Litchfield High School. In addition, the use of performance rubrics, peer editing, one-to-one conferences, and Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) rubrics in some classes assist students in the self-reflection/assessment process. The self-study survey indicates that at the present time only 50-60% of students report opportunities for self-assessment. With the upcoming implementation of additional school-wide rubrics, students will have additional opportunities for self-analysis. The products of these self-directed activities together with musical performances, plays, community-based construction projects, the school newspaper, and art exhibits provide opportunities for students to demonstrate and apply knowledge and learning. Budget cuts have caused the elimination of technology offerings for students in grades 7 and 8 as well as the school to career and Automotive Repair programs 9-12. Reinstitution of these programs will return the opportunity for self-directed learning and

application of learning to all levels of the student population. (*self-study, survey information, observations*)

There is evidence of higher order thinking in honors and advanced placement courses as well as in the use of the Big Ideas as a basis for learning in all disciplines. However, 45% of students reports that teachers emphasize breadth over depth of coverage of the curriculum, and only 60% of parents and students feel that students are challenged to think creatively. Increased use of higher order thinking in all courses, regardless of level, will result in the opportunity for all students to achieve the high expectations set out by the school's mission statement. (*self-study, survey information, observations*)

Teachers use feedback from students, supervisors, parents, and other teachers to improve instruction. The administration requires teachers to have students complete evaluations at the end of every course. There are formal and informal observations by supervisors, who provide feedback on instruction. Department chairs have limited time to observe, evaluate, and provide content oriented feedback to staff members. Teachers share feedback with colleagues at daily grade 7 and 8 team meetings and at monthly 9-12 department meetings. Only 33% of parents reports that teachers seek their feedback on student learning. More extensive feedback from parents would enhance teachers' effectiveness in planning appropriate instruction. Teachers utilize team, department, and faculty meetings to discuss instructional practices and analyze student work. However, there are several departments without chairs who do not meet, and teachers teaching at both the grades 7-8 and 9-12 are not available to attend department or team meetings. There is no formal process at Litchfield High School for the discussion of instructional

practices and analysis of student work although some discussion of instructional practice does occur during the two release days for curriculum development. Insufficient time and lack of a formal process for collaboration to analyze student work, share feedback, and discuss instructional practices hinder the ability of staff members to use data to improve instruction. Development of a formal process for more extensive collaboration will improve the quality of instruction. (*self-study, teachers, survey data*)

Most teachers undertake an individual initiative to stay current on effective instructional approaches and to reflect about their own practice. District resources are provided for teachers to attend workshops in their areas of expertise, and upon return they are required to share new learning with their colleagues. The leadership at Litchfield High School has begun an initiative for all staff members to read and discuss research on reading instruction. The district's teacher evaluation plan requires teachers to submit an annual self-assessment and to support the achievement of instructional goals with data and student work. Development of a teacher portfolio is also used as evidence for instructional improvement. Teachers report that in recent years there has been little or no professional development in instructional practice provided in district. (*self-study, teachers, school leadership team*)

Teachers are concerned that in the last two years professional development goals are required to relate solely to the district and school goal of reading comprehension. Professional development opportunities in district are reserved only for monthly department meetings and weekly team meetings. Insufficient funds and time for professional development are preventing staff members from moving forward toward instructional improvement. The self-study survey reports that only 16.9% of teachers

believes that they receive adequate funds for professional development. Sufficient opportunities for professional growth in the area of current research on effective instructional approaches will lead to the amelioration of instruction and student learning. (*self-study, teachers, school leadership team*)

Litchfield High School uses technology effectively to support instruction and to improve student learning. In order to achieve the school's expectation for student learning to apply technology appropriately, students are required to successfully complete the computer applications course. Teachers and students use computer technology to conduct Internet research, create Power Point presentations, make spreadsheets, develop websites, and myriad other real world applications. Other uses of technology include graphing calculators, television monitors, overhead projectors, and the media retrieval distribution system. Although the school is equipped with a technology lab for computer assisted design, a business lab for computer applications, a grade 7 and 8 keyboarding lab, and a general use lab in the media center, the integration of technology into all subject areas has resulted in limited accessibility of computer labs. Many teachers expressed a need for additional computers in their classrooms for student use. At present, each classroom is equipped with one computer for teacher use. In order to provide students with keyboarding in grades 7 and 8, a course in technology education was eliminated. Increased access to computers and technology course offerings are needed to ensure that students and teachers have adequate and/or expanded opportunity to use computers for instruction and learning. (*teachers, self-study, facility tour*)

Litchfield Public Schools has developed a formal plan for review of veteran and new teacher performance based upon the Connecticut State Department of Education

guidelines for teacher evaluation. This supervision process makes use of teacher reflection, collection of data, and analysis of student work to improve instruction for the purpose of improving student learning. Prior to the implementation of this evaluation plan, the staff received one training session. As a result, some staff members indicate that they are not yet comfortable with the format and purpose of the process.

Effectiveness of the teacher evaluation plan is closely tied to effective professional development and timely feedback. Teachers are required to set goals for instructional improvement that will be supported by professional development opportunities. The district's lack of resources for professional development decreases the effectiveness of the teacher evaluation plan to improve instruction. The primary evaluators of teacher instruction are the principal, assistant principal, and department chairs. Insufficient time provided to department chairs for supervision and evaluation diminishes the benefits of the evaluation plan to provide instructional feedback to staff. Consistent implementation of this plan with attention to adequate resources has the potential to be extremely successful in improving instruction and student learning. (*self-study, teacher interviews, meetings with teachers*)

Commendations

1. Effective use of technology for instruction
2. Opportunities for independent study and cross-age teaching and the LITE program
3. Computer application course provided for all students
4. Implementation of a school-wide goal for reading comprehension

Recommendations

1. Define and implement instructional strategies that align with the district's mission and expectations for student learning
2. Increase the use of student-centered instructional strategies and programs at all levels but particularly in general and college prep classes
3. Develop and implement a process for interdisciplinary collaboration
4. Develop a formal process for the analysis of student work and the sharing of instructional practices
5. Develop a formal process for staff involvement in selection of professional development opportunities
6. Align professional development activities with the mission statement and expectations for student learning
7. Make provisions for adequate time and resources for professional development and teacher evaluation in regard to instructional improvement
8. Increase the number of computers available for student use in classrooms

Teaching and Learning Standard

4

Assessment of Student Learning

Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Its purpose is to inform students regarding their learning progress and teachers regarding ways to adjust the curriculum and instruction to respond effectively to the learning needs of students. Further, it communicates to the school community the progress of students in achieving the school's expectations for student learning and course-specific learning goals. Assessment results must be continually discussed to improve curriculum and instruction.

1. The school shall have a process to assess school-wide and individual student progress in achieving the academic expectations in the mission based on school-wide rubrics.
2. The school's professional staff shall use data to assess the success of the school in achieving its civic and social expectations.
3. For each learning activity teachers shall clarify to students the relevant school-wide academic expectations and course-specific learning goals that will be assessed.
4. Teachers shall base classroom assessment of student learning on school-wide and course-specific rubrics.
5. Teachers shall use varied assessment strategies to determine student knowledge, skills, and competencies and to assess student growth over time.
6. Teachers shall meet collaboratively to discuss and share student work and the results of student assessments for the purposes of revising the curriculum and improving instructional strategies.
7. The school's professional development program shall provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate in developing a broad range of student assessment strategies.
8. The school's professional staff shall communicate:
 - individual student progress in achieving school-wide academic expectations to students and their families;
 - the school's progress achieving all school-wide expectations to the school community.

Conclusions

At Litchfield High School, class learning outcomes/objectives are posted and reviewed daily. Assignments and assessments are aligned with curriculum goals. However, there is no clear evidence that teachers have connected their assignment/assessment strategies with the expectations for student learning. The school is implementing a rubric addressing the reading aspect of the communication expectation, but rubrics assessing other aspects of the expectations for student learning have yet to be widely used. All learning expectations from the mission need to be incorporated into assignments and assessments as well as clearly communicated to students for them to fully understand, embrace, and benefit from the Litchfield High School Mission. (*self-study, teachers, student shadowing, student work*)

Many teachers use specific scoring criteria (e.g. rubrics) to evaluate and grade student work, but this practice is not consistent across all faculty and course levels. Honors level students report opportunities for rich multi-leveled performance assessments with delineated performance criteria. Commentary from college prep and general students reveals that they did not feel they are being challenged beyond direct instruction and that assessment focuses primarily on basic procedures and writing conventions; students comment that limited higher order thinking is required. Rubrics frequently consist of grading checklists rather than specific indicators that describe achievement levels, and many newly formed rubrics do not contain measurable language. Departments are currently working to create more clear criteria based on

specific curriculum objectives. Specific school-wide scoring academic rubrics aligned with the expectations for student learning from the mission have been developed, but are not implemented across the school. The reading rubric is the only rubric used in all areas. In some cases, however, departments have changed the school-wide rubric to fit specific discipline reading expectations removing the original focus of the rubric and removing the rubric's original alignment with the with the expectations for student learning. Student work examples reflect both scoring checklists and specific criteria to evaluate student work. However, many work examples reflect selected response assessment with limited open-ended responses. Performance/authentic assessments with specific measurable scoring criteria (rubrics) are necessary for fair and equitable evaluation for student learning and student achievement. (*teachers, self-study, student work*)

A wide range of authentic assessment strategies is used in science, technology, and art. Environthon, Orbital Walk: Dancing To The Music Of The Atom, Model U.N. Population Conference, Logo and Packaging Designs, Pamphlets, the Litchfield High School Newsletter, and art assignments all include detailed, measurable, standards-based criteria to assess students' knowledge, skills, and competencies. Both technology and art also maintain portfolio assessments that authentically measure student growth over time. The technology and art departments have also collaborated on units of study and cooperatively developed criteria. (*self-study, teachers, parents*)

The use of such varied assessment strategies, however, is not evident in all curriculum areas, by all teachers, or at all course levels. Honors courses challenge students to become active, self-directed learners by providing rigorous alternative/authentic assessments for students such as portfolios and culminating

activities. Conversely, such opportunities for students' application of knowledge were rarely witnessed in college prep and general courses. Rigor and expectations were noticeably lower, with focus on reiteration of information and lower level thinking. Student work samples provided were limited in the range of assessment strategies used. Most assessments were based on reading and writing or mathematical expectations, including CAPT expectations. Portfolios in English were designed to track student awareness of conventional writing skills rather than help students or teachers assess students' growth over time. (*self-study, student work, teachers, students*)

A process has been initiated to revise curriculum based on student performance data. This process is in its infancy, and the opportunity for teachers to meet and discuss curriculum revision occurs two days a year. The uniformity of data used is inconsistent as the school has not created one specific common assessment by discipline to identify areas of weakness in terms of student achievement. Teacher reflection and engagement in the self-study process have provided the initiative to develop foundational changes to evaluate curriculum and effectively impact student learning such as common rubrics across science labs, common eighth grade science exams, common seventh grade science assessments, core texts and common grade-level, standards-based assessments in English courses, and common math assessments. The leadership team supports and this principal is committed to this capacity-building initiative. The use of faculty meeting time will be dedicated to further reinforce this initiative. Common assessments across disciplines will offer teachers the ability to derive common data that can be used to inform curricular revision based on student needs. (*self-study, teachers, leadership team*)

Reflective practice is a focus area of the Litchfield High School Professional Development Plan. The study indicates that teachers analyze students' assessment results in order to adjust teaching strategies for more effective learning. Student work samples evidenced the opportunity for students to revise work; students reveal that extra help is provided during flex time daily. However, there is no evidence to show that modification to instructional practices in response to student assessments is done while the course is being taught. While many classes are comprised of students of varying abilities, differentiated instructional practices to meet student needs based on assessment results, were not witnessed during student shadowing nor affirmed during student interviews. Regular evaluation of student assessments will enable teachers to identify the need to modify instructional practices based on specific student needs identified during data analysis. (*student work, students, assessment standards committee*)

Department and team meetings are scheduled on a regular basis, but student work is not regularly shared and analyzed during these meetings. Student performance is discussed in terms of grades achieved not in terms of student progress in relation to meeting standards. In some cases, school-wide assessment results have been used to impact curriculum and instruction. When curricular and instructional changes in science, math, and language arts are based on CAPT data. Action plans are in place and include specific CAPT-related instruction and assessment by department with a set timeline and delineated responsibilities in grades 7-10. The world language department has adjusted curriculum sequence as a consequence of analyzing such assessment results. While discussions are taking place around the development of additional common assessments,

sponsored by the school itself, this has not yet come to fruition. (*self-study, department chairs, teachers, student work*)

Student work samples show that many teachers provide students with rubrics to establish how assignments and class activities will be assessed. Information and course material is provided at the beginning of each semester and aligned with assignments. According to the Litchfield High School self-study survey, 88.2% of the students and 92.2% of parents believe that the teachers adequately explain how work/learning will be assessed and graded. Parents are provided criteria information at open house, during conferences, on assignment feedback sheets, on detailed interim reports, and upon request. Student work samples reflect written teacher feedback in addition to checklists and/or rubrics. Teacher feedback is different in terms of program level, however, and while teacher feedback informs future student performance consistently in the honors level classes, the teacher feedback at college prep and general programs is limited by a narrower range of assessments. (*self-study, student work, students, student shadowing*)

Professional development opportunities do not assist all teachers to develop a range of assessment strategies. Although there is a plan in place and each department has already formally met once to discuss curriculum issues, work on revisions, and to develop assessment strategies, there is little evidence from our meeting with the department chairs and from teacher interviews that the development of alternative assessments has been included in these discussions. Student work samples reflect few open-ended opportunities for students to respond in different ways that engage their higher level thinking abilities. The limited use of performance or other alternative assessments (outside of art, technology, and science) fails to provide the opportunity for

all students to apply their knowledge in new and different ways. Enabling teachers to develop a wider range of assessment techniques will, in turn, enable all students to engage in higher level thinking as a means to meet standards and expectations for student learning. (*assessment standards committee, teachers, self-study*)

The school has developed specific rubrics that have clear levels of performance and indicators of success for the communication, problem-solving, and technology expectations for student learning. Currently, only the reading rubric connected with the communication expectation is being used in varying degrees across all disciplines. The examples of this rubric that accompany student work reveal that teachers are not using the levels of performance and indicators of successful accomplishment in consistent ways. (*self-study, teachers, administrators*)

A range of data is used to assess school performance and report that performance to the community. Students in academic difficulty have a letter sent home to parents, and a plan is devised to help those students improve their performance. Student standardized test results (PSAT, SAT, CAPT, CMT, and AP) are reported to parents and to the public. The school also sends a monthly newsletter home to parents as a means to report the school's progress in reaching other identified targets, such as students who scored high on standardized tests or received awards and recognition for their performance. The annual strategic school profile also reports data to the public concerning student performance. Since the school's academic expectations for student learning are not fully implemented, data has yet to be collected and information on student progress yet to be reported to students, to their families, and to the public. (*self-study, school website, teachers, guidance personnel*)

The school relies primarily on student participation in the Civics Course (which includes 12 hours of community service), the Personal Financial Management course (which requires students to develop and practice social skills), and physical education and health as a means to develop data that indicates student success in meeting the school's stated civic and social expectations. Other indicators of student performance are derived from student involvement in extracurricular activities such as the school newspaper, drama performances, and academic awards night. However, there are no instruments currently available to track other student performance. As the mission and expectations for student learning are new, further delineation of alternative assessments that measure student performance in different ways need to be constructed and implemented to ensure that all students are provided opportunities to meet the civic and social expectations. For students to develop sound civic and social behaviors aligned with the expectations for student learning, and to impact their contribution to society, grades 7-12 indicators with aligned criteria need to be implemented. While the self-study emphasizes that the student handbook is a resource for civic and social expectations, little reference to the handbook for civic and social criteria was evidenced. (*self-study, student handbook, teachers, community members*)

Commendations

1. The wide range of authentic performance assessments with aligned criteria in the visual arts, technology, and science
2. The support of the leadership team and the commitment of the principal to the capacity-building initiative to develop foundational changes in curriculum, instruction, and assessment

3. The work of the leadership team and teachers to work collaboratively to develop data-driven school improvement that informs curriculum revision and instruction
4. The initiative and the development of common assignments and assessments in English, math, and social studies
5. The strong and ongoing teacher communication with parents regarding student academic progress and achievement

Recommendations

1. Provide professional development on the construction and implementation of performance/alternative assessments and rubrics
2. Implement the school-wide rubrics aligned with the expectations for student learning
3. Implement instructional strategies and assessment that challenge and meet the needs of all students at Litchfield High School
4. Develop uniform assessments across disciplines to provide common data to inform curriculum revisions and instruction
5. Develop protocols to drive teacher conversations around the analysis of student work
6. Develop an instrument that tracks student civic/social performance throughout the Litchfield High School experience

Support Standard

5

Leadership and Organization

The way in which a school organizes learning for students, fosters leadership, and engages its members has a profound effect on teaching and learning. The professional culture of the school must be characterized by thoughtful, reflective, and constructive discourse about decision-making and practices which supports student learning and well-being.

1. The school board and superintendent shall ensure that the principal has sufficient autonomy and decision-making authority to lead the school in achieving the mission and expectations for student learning.
2. The principal shall provide leadership in the school community by creating and maintaining a shared vision, direction, and focus for student learning.
3. Teachers as well as administrators other than the principal shall provide leadership essential to the improvement of the school.
4. The organization of the school and its educational programs shall promote the school's mission and expectations for student learning.
5. Student grouping patterns shall reflect the diversity of the student body, foster heterogeneity, reflect current research and best practices, and support the achievement of the school's mission and expectations for student learning.
6. The schedule shall be driven by the school's mission and expectations for student learning and shall support the effective implementation of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
7. Meaningful roles in the decision-making process shall be accorded to students, parents, and all members of the school staff to promote an atmosphere of participation, responsibility, and ownership.
8. Each teacher shall have a student load that enables the teacher to meet the learning needs of individual students.
9. There shall be a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult member of the school community in addition to the school guidance counselor who personalizes each student's educational experience, knows the student well, and assists the student in achieving the school-wide expectations for student learning.

10. The professional staff shall collaborate within and across departments in support of learning for all students.
11. All school staff shall be involved in promoting the well-being and learning of students.
12. Student success shall be regularly acknowledged, celebrated, and displayed.
13. The climate of the school shall be safe, positive, respectful, and supportive, resulting in a sense of pride and ownership.
14. The school board shall support the implementation of the school's mission and expectations for student learning.

Conclusions

The positive direction of the Litchfield High School is due, in large part, to the efforts of both the principal and assistant principal. As a team, these administrators have a clear vision for the school's development and work together to maintain a positive community for student learning. This new administration has enhanced open communication with department heads, teachers, and staff members. In addition, students and parents comment on the positive changes in communication and atmosphere at the school. Formal meetings are held between both administrators and the school's teacher-leaders. Some elements that this group may consider are the confusion about the responsibilities for teacher observation among these leaders as evaluations often lack consistency and continuity and the provision of necessary resources and professional development for administrators, leaders, and teachers to reach the school goals and to increase community involvement. (*school board, school leaders, teachers, parents, students*)

The teachers of Litchfield High School have worked hard to maintain appropriate instruction in an ever-changing school environment. Changes of administrators and

inadequate facilities have not hindered the teachers' abilities to be leaders for their students. Teachers serve as coaches, activity leaders, class advisors, department chair persons, team leaders, and examples of on-going learning. The teachers' rapport with students allows open communication for individualized student focus. This rapport assists students in making informed life choices and learning to be active members in society. Advancements in school improvement are seen in this area through student involvement both in and out of school. (*students, support staff, observation*)

The school board and superintendent have given appropriate autonomy to the administrators. They have empowered the administrators to make decisions and guide the school in order to fulfill the school's mission and expectations. The board, along with the principal and superintendent, plans to continue its commitment in fostering development in the areas of assessment, strategy, collaboration, observation, and reflection for its leaders. The principal is appropriately included in policy and budget decisions. (*parents, central office administrators, teachers*)

The small community of Litchfield High School lends itself to personalization. The school is divided into middle school and high school organizations in the same building. The teachers of the grade 7 and 8 teams meet daily to address student learning styles and age-appropriate issues. In grades 9 – 12, there are flex periods at the end of a school day where students have opportunities to join activities and clubs that reflect their individual interests. The administration supports the mission and expectations for student learning, although at this time, there is limited collaboration between teachers in the high school to create a formal interdisciplinary framework. (*self-study, teachers, panel presentation*)

Students in grades 7 and 8 are placed by achievement level in mathematics and English courses and are heterogeneously placed in all other courses. In grades 9 -12, students are placed in three different instructional levels. The high school program is predominantly delivered through homogeneously grouped classes. Students with special needs have the same access to all courses and opportunities that the school community provides. The school administrators, department chairs, and guidance counselors are reviewing appropriate student placement based on achievement and educational research to insure student-based, challenging instruction. (*students, support staff, school leaders*).

The block schedule at Litchfield High School is currently under review by the administration. The block schedule interferes with the school's co-op program with Wamogo High School, scheduling between the middle school and the high school levels, and the continuity of learning in some courses. In the past, the co-op program has provided more extensive course offerings, but scheduling conflicts have caused a reduction in the breadth of these offerings. The conflict between the eight period middle school schedule and the four period block schedule for the high school can create disruption during passing times. These different schedules make it more difficult to utilize educators across grade levels in this financially challenged school district. The block schedule often breaks the academic continuity as well. A break in the continuation of instruction in mathematics, for example, could force a high school student to have a two semester hiatus until the next sequential course is offered. (*student shadowing, teachers, self-study*)

The administration regularly involves the staff in decision-making. Staff members frequently share their ideas and concerns with the administration and these are

discussed and implemented as appropriate. Students channel their concerns and ideas through student council members who communicate them to the principal and faculty members. Parents feel a sense of community and report that they feel welcomed at the school and that their ideas are welcomed by the administration and staff. Feedback is given by the parents at open house and in communication with teachers through e-mail, conferences, and phone conversations. *(survey information, students, parents)*

Teachers at the high school level teach three out of four class periods a day. At the middle school level, teachers teach five class periods out of eight and are assigned a period for team planning. Each teacher has eighty minutes per day devoted to teacher preparation and planning. Teachers are not assigned collateral duties. Flex period gives teachers the opportunity to meet individually and informally with their students.

Teachers are provided with sufficient time to meet the individual needs of their students.

Small class size and teacher student ratios are important to the school community.

Budget conflicts and increasing grade sizes could pose a problem if a framework to maintain these ratios is not implemented. Paraprofessionals accompany selected students to assigned class for some of the special needs students, aiding in lowering staff to student ratio. Administrators, teachers, and counselors set time aside to monitor class sizes and discuss upcoming complications in ratios. *(parents, observations, survey information)*

The formal collaboration at Litchfield High School varies by grade level. Grade 7 and 8 teams meet daily, but there is limited collaboration at the high school level where there is monthly communication among departments and semi-monthly communication between departments via department heads. Interdisciplinary collaboration is necessary

for meaningful and long-lasting educational experiences that can link student knowledge in one subject area to their knowledge in another. (*meeting with teachers, school leaders, teacher interviews*)

The staff at Litchfield High School is strongly involved in the support of their students' learning. Guidance staff, secretaries, cafeteria staff, and custodians maintain a welcoming environment for the students. The students are able to feel a sense of individuality and can freely communicate with the staff. This friendly environment allows students to feel free, safe, and protected in their school community. This healthy environment enables students to focus on becoming productive learners. (*self-study, teachers, support staff*)

Litchfield High School News, local newspapers, and the district website celebrate student achievement, accomplishments, and involvement in the school community. Art work and sports awards are appropriately displayed throughout the school. Litchfield High School also displays work and accomplishments of activities and clubs. A few of the events that highlight student achievement are the honor roll, technology education and art shows, academic and sports awards, and honor society ceremonies. Although there is room for improvement in the classrooms regarding the display of student work in various disciplines, there is a strong overall effort to recognize student achievements as part of the culture of the school. (*self-study, observations, facility tour*)

The environment of the school is a positive one. Students and staff members work to maintain a welcoming and respectful school atmosphere. Likewise, interactions between faculty members are overwhelmingly positive. Peers aid and commend one another in their accomplishments. They work with each other to learn, problem-solve,

and achieve. Interaction between faculty and students is the same. Litchfield High School's social environment allows students to graduate as affective individuals who are positive and informed contributors to society. (*parents, teachers, students*)

While Litchfield High School's teachers frequently engage in informal conversation about student learning and achievement, there is minimal formal discussion of student achievement and learning topics. Lack of appropriate professional development among disciplines, across disciplines, among administrators, and all other staff is hindering the development of the Litchfield High School program. There is a strong need for distinct leadership roles and immersion in current best practices within and among disciplines in Litchfield High School. In order to keep students knowledgeable, productive, and skillful the district needs to facilitate the use of updated instructional techniques and practices. Roles in the teacher observation and evaluation process need to be clarified as evaluations often lack consistency and continuity. (*self-study, teachers, school leader*)

Commendations

1. The strong commitment and transformational leadership of the principal and assistant principal
2. The positive rapport among administrators, teachers, and students
3. Strong administrative efforts to communicate with teachers, students, and staff members
4. The variety of outstanding celebrations of student achievement and school pride
5. The high degree of maturity and respect among students

Recommendations:

1. Develop a formal plan to increase and improve collaboration among staff members, around instruction, curriculum and assessment issues
2. Assess the high school schedule to evaluate its impact on student learning
3. Provide clear and updated job descriptions of department chairs
4. Consistently implement the teacher observation and evaluation plan
5. Provide current, effective, and reflective professional development

Support Standard

6

School Resources for Learning

Student learning and well-being are dependent upon adequate and appropriate support programs and services. The school is responsible for providing an effective range of integrated resources to enhance and improve student learning and well-being and to support the school's mission and expectations.

All Student Support Services

1. The school's student support services shall be consistent with the school's mission and expectations for student learning.
2. The school shall allocate resources, programs, and services so that all students have an equal opportunity to achieve the school's expectations for student learning.
3. Student support personnel shall enhance student learning by interacting and working cooperatively with professional and other staff and by utilizing community resources to address the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of students.
4. All student support services shall be regularly evaluated and revised to support improved student learning.
5. There shall be a system for effective and ongoing communication with students, parents/guardians, and school personnel, designed to keep them informed about the types of available student support services and identified student needs.
6. Student records, including health and immunization records, shall be maintained in a confidential and secure manner consistent with federal and state law.
7. There shall be sufficient certified/licensed personnel and support staff to provide effective counseling, health, special education, and library media services.

Guidance Services

8. The school shall provide a full range of comprehensive guidance services, including:
 - individual and group meetings with counseling personnel;
 - personal, career, and college counseling;
 - student course selection assistance;
 - collaborative outreach to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers;
 - appropriate support in the delivery of special education services for students.

Health Services

9. The school's health services shall provide:
 - preventive health services and direct intervention services;
 - appropriate referrals;
 - mandated services;
 - emergency response mechanisms;
 - ongoing student health assessment

Library Information Services

10. The library/information services program and materials shall be fully integrated into the school's curriculum and instructional program.
11. Library/information services personnel shall be knowledgeable about the curriculum and support its implementation.
12. A wide range of materials, technologies, and other library/information services that are responsive to the school's student population shall be available to students and faculty and utilized to improve teaching and learning.
13. Students, faculty, and support staff shall have regular and frequent access to library/information services, facilities, and programs as an integral part of their educational experience before, during, and after the school day.
14. The library/information services program shall foster independent inquiry by enabling students and faculty to use various school and community information resources and technologies.
15. Policies shall be in place for the selection and removal of information resources and the use of technologies and the Internet.

Special Education Services

16. The school shall provide special education services related to the identification, monitoring, and referral of students in accordance with local, state, and federal laws.

Conclusions

Litchfield High School has an array of resources, programs, and services equally accessible to all students. The library/information program, guidance, special education and related services, reading consultant, nurse, psychologist, social worker, and contracted services are in place to support student achievement of academic expectations. Inadequate staffing, schedule constraints and facilities limitations hinder the full and consistent delivery of resources. (*self-study, teachers, students*)

The library media specialist is the district coordinator for library services and is often away from the building to attend to other duties. Staffing in this area does not allow for hours beyond the academic day. The three special education teachers and nine special education assistants are spread thinly for the provision of mandated services. There is a disparity in the caseload of teachers at the grades 7-8 level as compared with the grades 9-12 level. The school psychologist is in the building only one day per week, limiting the opportunity for required triennial testing., but the planned addition of a .4 school psychologist should help to remedy this concern. The reading consultant is available to provide services to students and staff members. The contracting of services in occupational therapy and physical therapy meets students needs while one social worker serves the entire district limiting the timeliness of response. (*self-study, teachers, administrators*)

There are three guidance counselors to serve 692 students. The guidance program provides a curriculum that is intended to be delivered through group programs and individual meetings. Students in grades 7 and 8 have extensive opportunities to explore academic, career, and special/enrichment areas. There is collaboration with the grade 7

and 8 wellness classes for this delivery. In grade 9-12, counselors meet frequently with individual students, but group meetings are severely limited. The grade 9-12 counselors have many administrative duties including administrative software coordination and development of the master schedule for the school. These duties limit available time for service delivery. The counselors provide programming for students and parents in grade 6 and grade 8 to facilitate the transition between programs. On the grade 9-12 level the 4 x4 block schedule impacts the scheduling of group presentations to all students.

Students' lack of classroom time or consistent presence in the same curricular area creates difficulties in consistent delivery of the guidance curriculum. A more consistent delivery will assure more equitable services. (*self-study, teachers, administrators*)

Consultation between special education and regular education teachers is vital to the coordination and facilitation of instruction. At Litchfield High School, grade 7 and 8 special educators meet with their respective teams on a daily basis. One meeting each week is designated for special education concerns. On the grade 9-12 level, consultation occurs primarily through e-mail and informal, personal contact. Lack of common planning/preparation time hinders the opportunity for in-depth sharing and coordination. (*self-study, teachers, administrators*)

Special education students are supported individually through a learning center. The amount and configuration of space is not conducive to academic support. Many students are placed in this small area, and it is overcrowded. Additionally, both physical and occupational therapies have no dedicated space to provide services. At times, services spill into the hallway. A better configuration of space will help to assure students better opportunity to focus. (*self-study, teachers, observation*)

The library media center is a vital resource that directly impacts student learning. Frequent use of the library for other purposes such as testing, daily study hall for middle school students, and conflict between grade level scheduling further impacts and limits access for classes and individual students. The configuration of the library precludes the future expansion of the book collection. Additionally, seating and grouping constraints necessitate the limitation of several groups working at the same time. Within the library, availability of computers for student access is severely limited. (*self-study, teachers, observation, building tours*)

The graduate of Litchfield High School is envisioned to be a productive, skilled, and knowledgeable individual. To that end, there are social and civic expectations for the students. One focal point of Litchfield High School's endeavor is the required Civics/Wellness/Personal Finance course. This course is a real-world focus in the areas defined by its title. The honor code, policies and rules communicated through the student planners clearly define the guidelines to be a "good citizen". (*self-study, school materials, teachers*)

Through support services and resources, direction and education in civic and social expectations are available to students. The wellness program in conjunction with grades 7 and 8 guidance presents programs on decision-making and good choices. The domains of career and social/equitable issues are addressed in group guidance sessions for students in grades 7 and 8. However, these domains are not being adequately addressed in grades 9-12. A student/assistance program is a safety net for referrals on a variety of student emotional, social issues. While there are many forums through which

students receive support to achieve stated civic and social expectations, the access to these venues is limited and not consistent. (*self-study, teachers, students*)

Litchfield High School utilizes the flex period in grades 9-12 as an advisory period. Each student is assigned an advisor in grade 9 and chooses their advisor for grades 10-12. The ratio is 15-20 students to one advisor. On Wednesdays, this flex period is dedicated to activities; while during the remaining four days, students report to the advisor. Advisors distribute report cards and progress reports to each advisee. The advisor may use this opportunity to commend students or to discuss concerns with them. During flex time, students also have the opportunity to go to the library or seek out teachers for additional instruction or clarification. The advisor may be called upon during this time for academic help. The structure and time for this program helps to facilitate the personalization of a student's educational experience. The lack of a program or curriculum for this advisory program hinders a consistent and dedicated delivery of service. There is no advisory program for grades 7-8. (*self-study, students, faculty*)

The spectrum of Litchfield High School's student support services is comprehensive in its range and specific in its implementation. Library information services, guidance services, special educator program, health services, reading consultant, psychologist, social work, and contracted services span a broad range of support demanded by student needs to meet the expectations for student learning. Data concerning graduates and ongoing success and achievements indicated by standardized test scores speak to the delivery of support and consequential meeting of expectations.

Students, through utilization of resources, academic advisement, academic support, and available health and mental health services, are afforded opportunities to realize the mission statement. (*self-study, teachers, parents*)

Litchfield High School has a certified library media specialist with a Master's degree in Library Science. As the K-12 Litchfield High School Director of Library Services she is knowledgeable about the library curriculum, currently modeled on the Big6. She meets regularly with the other librarians in the district to provide consistency in delivery of services throughout the district. The librarian attends department chair meetings twice a month and meets with teachers to schedule library time. She provides ongoing revisions to the library curriculum to align with the schools' evolving curriculum needs. In grades 7-12, there are some collaborative lessons that involve the use of the library's resources. In the middle school, there are specific units linked to formal reading, 7th grade Social Studies, 9-12 History, Language Arts, and the Science departments. Future plans for aligning the curriculum with state and national standards have been discussed. The library staff utilizes the Athena database for organization and analysis of district library collection. The librarian also serves on the town technology task force and the education sub-committee. This involvement provides currency and awareness of developing and evolving programs. (*self-study, teachers, classroom visits*)

There is formal evaluation conducted for most Litchfield High School support services. Guidance distributes written post-program questionnaires; the special education department conducts an intensive mandated 5-year evaluation, and its students complete an annual evaluation; the library evaluates its programs through informal student and staff evaluations. Personnel use their own evaluation as a way to assess their programs.

Since most programs are evaluated informally, however, it is difficult to use constituent data to facilitate improvement. While individual performance evaluations are linked to program and service delivery, separate evaluations ensure that changes are aligned with the school's mission and expectations. (*self-study, teachers, administrators*)

The committed and collegial Litchfield High School student support personnel endeavor to coordinate, cooperate, and collaborate with professional and other staff members and link to community resources to address the academic, social and emotional, and physical needs of students. In grades 7 and 8 the team structure is a venue enabling the desired coordination, cooperation, and collaboration to be achieved. Each day of the week focuses on specific areas such as special education on Tuesdays. The team meetings have an impact on addressing these needs. In grades 9-12, these endeavors are hindered by lack of common planning time. While attempts are certainly made to meet and interact to meet student needs, the results can not be consistent. This lack impacts on the coordination in meeting student needs. (*self-study, teachers, staff members*)

Litchfield High School communicates consistently with its constituency through an assortment of media. These communications reflect services and resources available to students and identified needs. The emerging Litchfield High School website will enhance information delivery. E-mail is a vital mode of communication between students and faculty members; between parents and faculty members; and, between faculty members. Newsletters and mailings assure that information is universally sent. The director of special services mails a letter to parents outlining services. The Litchfield High School student planner is another valuable document for informing both students and families of available resources and programs. The annual Litchfield High School

Program of Studies publication is a valuable resource in this communication process. Teachers in grades 7 and 8 use team meetings to communicate among themselves about student learning and successes. Parents have access to teachers for meetings to discuss and act upon resources, services, and referrals. Teachers also utilize progress reports and report cards to share information. Teachers readily contact parents and students. This varied system is accessible to members of the Litchfield High School community. The availability of varying means assures consistent and constancy of communication.

(teachers, self-study, parents)

Independent inquiry at Litchfield High School is fostered through a knowledgeable and caring library media staff that makes extensive efforts to meet each individual's need for resources before, during, and after school. The library has purchased major, high quality, online subscription databases such as "Opposing Viewpoints" that can be accessed through school computers as well as at home. Students and staff members frequently visit the library to request assistance in locating resources and materials relevant to their needs. The Litchfield High School Library has an extensive collection of resources available in print and in computer-based and video/DVD formats. The print collection of 15,000 volumes is well above the recommended levels, and new resources are being added through the creative efforts of the library media staff to secure community grants. Resources are often added in consultation with teachers to reflect curriculum needs. While the Litchfield High School is not ethnically diverse, the library media service has made a special effort to include materials reflective of a wide variety of cultures and ethnicities, supporting the student

expectation to contribute to a society which is increasingly diverse. (*self-study, teachers, observation*)

The Litchfield High School Library is staffed by a certified library media specialist with a Masters Degree in Library Science and one paraprofessional. The knowledge and professionalism of both staff members are evident in their attention to students and teacher needs. This results in an organized, welcoming library, rich in information services ranging from books and online databases to an efficient media retrieval system for delivery of curriculum resources. The library media center is open from before school until 3:00 on a daily basis. It is sometimes closed for other school-wide activities such as standardized testing. Such use of the facilities results in no or limited access for student learning. During the school day, students request passes from teachers to utilize the library during study hall, flex time, or they come with classes scheduled by teachers with the library media staff. Some students have a regularly scheduled study hall in the library, sometimes limiting access for other students needing library resources. (*self-study, teachers, observation*)

Litchfield High School has written policies for the selection and removal of information resources and the use of technologies and the Internet. The library media center has written policies on file. An acceptable use policy is part of the log-on procedure on the school computers. A school honor code articulates appropriate use of intellectual property. The library policies provide a clearly articulated way to evaluate the library collection and to assess relevance to current teacher and student needs. The acceptable use policy assures that Litchfield High Schools' technology is secure, properly

functioning, and appropriately used for meeting the school's mission and expectations.
(*self-study, teachers, observation*)

The guidance department, in conjunction with the director of special services is responsible for the maintenance of records in a secure and confidential manner. The school psychologist maintains her testing records in her office. In the Litchfield High School guidance area, records are locked and secure for the required time frame. Prior to the destroying of any records, notification to concerned persons is sent by the director of special services. The permanent records are kept in a locked safe, after ancillary materials are destroyed. A release is required of all persons requesting the transmission or acquisition of records. The guidelines and policies are consistent with federal and state law. Records are confidential and secure. (*school support staff, observations, self-study*)

Commendations

1. The extraordinarily committed and dedicated staff that provides resources and services to all students in spite of varied limitations
2. The availability of the reading consultant to both students and staff members to support the meeting of student expectations
3. The collaboration and coordination of special education and regular education personnel on the grade 7 and 8 teams
4. The delivery of grade 7 and 8 guidance curriculum to all students
5. Acquisition of extensive additional funding for library resources through a community foundation

6. Multi-faceted communication system among members of Litchfield High School community members
7. The graduation requirement for a course in social and civic expectations

Recommendations

1. Align the library curriculum with expectations for student learning
2. Provide library staffing to provide for student and teacher access during the school day as well as outside regular school hours
3. Communicate the acceptable use policy to parents and community
4. Design a curriculum or guidelines for the advisory program to assure a student's personalized education experience
5. Acquire additional resources for the library such as books on tape to address diverse student learning needs
6. Provide time for the library media specialist to be involved with curriculum development and curriculum integration particularly at the 9-12 level
7. Explore using supervision by volunteers or support staff members to allow greater access to computers in the labs
8. Design formal evaluations for the library program and support service programs
9. Institute a plan for grades 9-12 guidance meetings to address student needs
10. Implement a comprehensive and consistent delivery system for guidance services

Support Standard



Community Resources for Learning

Active community and parent participation, facilities which support school programs and services, and dependable and adequate funding are necessary for the school to achieve its mission and expectations for student learning.

1. The school shall engage parents and families as partners in each student's education and shall encourage their participation in school programs and parent support groups.
2. The school shall foster productive business/community/higher education partnerships that support student learning.
3. The school site and plant shall support and enhance all aspects of the educational program and the support services for student learning.
4. The physical plant and facilities shall meet all applicable federal and state laws and shall be in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations.
5. Equipment shall be adequate, properly maintained, catalogued, and replaced when appropriate.
6. A planned and adequately funded program of building and site management shall ensure the appropriate maintenance, repair, and cleanliness of the school plant.
7. There shall be ongoing planning to address future programs, enrollment changes, staffing, facility, and technology needs as well as capital improvements.
8. The community and the district's governing body shall ensure an adequate and dependable source of revenue to provide and maintain appropriate school programs, personnel, services, facilities, equipment, technological support, materials, and supplies for student learning.
9. Faculty and building administrators shall have active involvement in the budgetary process, including its development and implementation.

Conclusions

Teaching and learning at Litchfield High School is supported by community groups. Historically active and newly-founded parent/community organizations are vital sources of information, empowerment, and support. The student teacher parent council has consistently provided support for school staff and programs. Recently-founded organizations such as the Plumb Hill Fields Project and the Litchfield Education Foundation have rallied behind current issues facing the school district. Frequent communications from school leaders relay information and keep parents current in regard to school activities and the impact of local decisions on the educational process. Continued communication and partnerships between teachers, school leaders, and parents are critical to the further success and function of Litchfield High. (*observations, facility tour, teachers*)

Long standing partnerships with local businesses and civic organizations lend strength and are an identifying aspect of the high school community. Business partnerships, community/cultural activities, and enriching academic opportunities are actively pursued. The prestigious Mabry Award challenges students to attain the highest levels of work and performance in music, visual arts, and language arts. Students who receive the awards are given \$3000 scholarships to continue their craft and must develop a portfolio of their own for the purpose of showing what they were able to accomplish through the scholarship program. The variety and success of these endeavors contribute to a sense of pride across the school and community. Every Litchfield High School student is required to take a computer applications course, aligned with Northwest Connecticut Community College requirements. Students who successfully complete the

coursework receive college credit through NCCC. Extensive effort is made to showcase achievements, present exemplary student work and performances, and make community connections. School leaders have taken advantage of the rich cultural and historical traditions of the Greater Litchfield Community and continue to use those community, business, and academic resources for the enhancement of the educational process and experiences of Litchfield High School students. (*parents, teacher, students, self-study, student work*)

The Litchfield High School facility does not adequately support all aspects of the educational process. The size of the building does not appropriately accommodate the school programs and student population. The lack of space combined with the breadth of available course offerings has resulted in the use of non-classroom space for instruction and individual student services. The use of all available space for instruction has resulted in inadequate teacher work areas. The limited size of many classrooms does not support flexible learning arrangements. Classrooms with specialized equipment are not large enough to adequately meet the needs of all school constituencies. Science classes utilized by non-science courses interfere with the set-up of labs or other specialized materials, time spent on labs, and cause the deletion of some lab activities. Such consequences negatively impact the school's ability to meet the stated mission and learning goals. (*self-study, observation, teachers, support staff*)

Litchfield High School provides a clean and healthy environment for its occupants. Routine maintenance requests are handled in a timely manner. Adequate supplies for both the custodial staff and the department of public works (DPW) are provided for basic maintenance, but large-scale maintenance provided by the DPW is not

always timely. Major maintenance projects are coordinated with the town's capital improvement plan. For several years, many large scale maintenance tasks have been postponed pending renovation and/or construction. Consequently, the roof has numerous leaks and the heating/cooling system does not function efficiently throughout the entire facility. Insufficient and excessive heating of various parts of the building creates physical discomfort, directly impacting the implementation of the educational program. Snow and ice removal is not consistently performed prior to arrival of students and staff members resulting in unsafe walking and driving conditions (*school support staff, self-study, teachers*)

Litchfield High School contracts with the DPW for large scale maintenance of the facility. The custodial staff addresses the general maintenance and cleaning of the facility. The custodial staff, DPW, and business manager meet weekly to discuss maintenance issues, and the implementation of a computerized maintenance tracking system is ongoing. There is no written preventative maintenance plan in place for the facility. While facility repair and basic maintenance is funded adequately, many capital improvements to address maintenance issues have been deferred pending approval of a new school construction bond. Although the bond has been approved, the excessive time frame for its approval and subsequent deferments have resulted in a deterioration of the overall facility and increased costs associated with necessary maintenance. Increased costs of deferred maintenance negatively impact the adequate funding of programs and facilities. (*school support staff, self-study, school board*)

Ongoing planning that addresses future programming, staffing, facility, and technology is in place at Litchfield High School. As part of the building project

initiative, a comprehensive document has been prepared that takes into account projections of future enrollment as well as capital improvements. A technology plan details the needs and plans of the district through 2006. The community has approved a bond issue in excess of \$33,000,000 that includes the renovation and expansion of the school facility. Construction is currently underway on an athletic field improvement and expansion project that was completely funded by private donations. The project will add sports fields, a track, and renovate present fields at a cost in excess of \$1,000,000. Completion of the athletic fields will create a modern sports complex for the use of all outdoor sports offered by Litchfield High School. (*panel presentation, school board, self-study*)

The physical plant and facilities meet applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. Litchfield High School has comprehensive policies in place regarding health and safety issues. Inspection by appropriate agencies occurs on a regular basis. (*central office administrators, support staff, self-study*)

Inadequate funding has negatively impacted many aspects of Litchfield High School. In recent years, the school has been affected by program, staff, and resource cuts. Changes in town leadership, school board members, and administrators have resulted in shifts of philosophy and vision. Approval of a school renovation project has given school and community members a brighter outlook. The project has been initiated and is moving forward at this time. School leaders maintain a positive approach towards the project, focusing on the benefits the renovations will bring to student learning . Architectural plans for the renovations and expansion have been completed and bids are

currently being solicited for the work. A fall 2006 completion is anticipated for this project. Collaboration with town leaders and the wider community in securing regular yearly funding to meet school needs and maintain appropriate conditions will be important to ensure quality teaching and learning. (*custodial staff, collected materials, parents/teachers, central office staff*)

An established budgetary process involves most members of the high school community. School leaders work with central office staff and town governance officials to provide context and framework for the yearly budget. School leaders also collaborate with board members, teachers, and support groups in presenting budget concerns and requests. A pattern of multiple budget referenda presents extensive challenges that are tied to historical trends, local business/community conditions, and non-school related fiscal matters. The collective efforts of high school faculty members and administrators in advocating appropriate and essential programs are an important part of the budget process. (*teachers, self-study, school/district budget report for 2003-2004*)

The equipment at Litchfield High School is generally adequate, properly maintained, catalogued, and replaced when appropriate. Replacement of equipment is done when adequate funding is available, and repair of equipment is done for both prolonging the usability of equipment as well as for circumstances when replacement is not possible in either a timely manner or when funding is not adequate. Some equipment in the school provides for the high achievement of learning standards. The video production facility and its associated equipment are modern and sophisticated. Five functioning computer labs are utilized by the school community. Two of these labs are available for both instruction and student use. The limited number of labs and the

demand placed upon them does not allow for effective use by the school population, however. While the equipment is generally adequate for the mission of the school, improvements in both quantity and modernization are necessary. Additional computer availability, reliable copier machines, and space and equipment necessary for confidential communications between teachers and parents would enhance and support the learning environment and educational programs. *(staff members, teachers, observation)*

The school board considers school and community needs when making decisions. Board members advocate the improvement and advancement of Litchfield High School programs and conditions within fiscal constraints. The need for improvement of school maintenance and reduction of costs resulted in those responsibilities passing to the DPW. Board members are aware of the school's newly adopted mission and recognize the importance of providing support necessary for reaching goals and expectations. New policies, such as the district technology plan, have been approved and reflect and support the school's mission. Planning for facility improvement and maintenance are in place and continue to be revised. School leaders, district administration, and school board members are dedicated to making decisions that improve conditions for student learning. *(central office staff, self-study)*

Commendations

1. The active involvement and frequent communication between the teachers and parents in support of the students and the school
2. The active involvement of the Litchfield community, including businesses, local citizens, and cultural groups in the support of the school's mission and support of the school's educational program

3. The generous anonymous donation of funds and the continuing oversight by the Plumb Hill Fields Project for the construction and renovation of the athletic fields
4. The Litchfield Education Foundation's support for the successful passage of the capital improvement bond in April 2004
5. The valuable community and business partnerships enhance and enrich the educational experience of Litchfield High School students.
6. The availability and student use of video editing equipment that benefits the Litchfield High School community.

Recommendations

1. Provide school facilities that adequately and appropriately support all aspects of the school's mission and educational program
2. Plan and implement appropriate facility maintenance and repair independent of pending capital improvement proposals
3. Ensure an adequate level of annual financial resources necessary to effectively implement the school's mission
4. Provide additional computer hardware and appropriate software for school-wide application
5. Provide the infrastructure necessary to ensure confidential communications among students, parents, teachers, and staff members

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

This comprehensive evaluation report reflects the findings of the school's self-study and those of the visiting committee. It provides a blueprint for the faculty, administration, and other officials to use to improve the quality of programs and services for the students in Litchfield High School. The faculty, school board, and superintendent should also be apprised by the building administration yearly of progress made addressing visiting committee recommendations.

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

A school's continued accreditation is based on satisfactory progress implementing valid recommendations of the visiting committee and others identified by the Commission as it monitors the school's progress and changes which occur at the school throughout the decennial cycle. To monitor the school's progress in the Follow-Up Program, the Commission requires that the principal of Litchfield 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 Commission in its notification letters to the school. School officials are expected

to have completed or be in the final stages of completion of all valid visiting committee recommendations by the time the Five-Year Progress Report is submitted. The Commission may request additional Special Progress Reports if one or more of the Standards are not being met in a satisfactory manner or if additional information is needed on matters relating to evaluation report recommendations or substantive changes in the school.

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

The Commission urges school officials to establish a formal follow-up program at once to review and implement all findings of the self-study and valid recommendations identified in the visiting committee report. An outline of the Follow-Up Program is available in the Commission's *Accreditation Handbook* which was given to the school at the onset of the self-study. Additional direction regarding suggested procedures and

reporting requirements is provided at Follow-Up Seminars offered by Commission staff following the on-site visit.

The visiting committee extends its appreciation to the entire Litchfield High School community for the level of hospitality and cooperation extended to us during the visit. We found everyone to be candid, concerned, and interested in the welfare of the school and students.

Substantive Change

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

- ◆ elimination of fine arts, practical arts, and student activities
- ◆ diminished upkeep and maintenance of facilities
- ◆ significantly decreased funding
- ◆ cuts in the level of administrative and supervisory staffing
- ◆ cuts in the number of teachers and/or guidance counselors
- ◆ 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
- ◆ 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
- ◆ identification by the state as an underperforming school
- ◆ takeover by the state
- ◆ inordinate user fees