



VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT
for

Litchfield High School

Litchfield, CT

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

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

School and Community Summary

School and Community Summary

Litchfield High School is located in picturesque Litchfield, Connecticut, in the northwest corner of the state. Litchfield Public Schools serve the boroughs of Bantam and Litchfield, and the villages of East Litchfield, Milton, and Northfield. Litchfield High School is located one mile from the center of town and is bordered by White Memorial, a 4,000 acre conservation center used for recreation and education.

With a population of 8,466 residents, Litchfield is culturally and ethnically homogenous. According to the 2010 Census, nearly 97% of the population is white. No identifiable minority group comprises more than 1.56% of the population. The median family income is \$100,833 and the per capita income is \$41,649. About 2.8% of district families are living below the poverty line.

While most of the businesses in town are retail - or service-based, residents tend to commute to nearby towns or cities such as Torrington, Waterbury, Danbury, or Hartford. The Litchfield Public School District is the largest employer in town, with 178 employees. Other schools in Litchfield include Wamogo, a regional high school for three neighboring towns, the Forman School, a private residential school for college-bound students with learning needs, the Connecticut Junior Republic and Touchstone, facilities for at-risk youth, and two Montessori schools.

Center School, Litchfield Intermediate School (LIS), and Litchfield High School (LHS) comprise Litchfield Public Schools. Students attend Center School from pre-kindergarten through grade three, and LIS from grades four through six. Litchfield High School includes a seventh- and eighth-grade middle school, as well as a traditional high school serving grade nine through twelve. After grade eight, some students apply to and attend Oliver Wolcott Regional Vocational Technical School, Wamogo's agricultural science program, or the Greater Hartford Academy for the Performing Arts.

The current 7-12 population at LHS is 469 students. In the last decade, there has been a downward trend in student enrollment. Since 2004, enrollment has declined by 34%. The current graduation rate is 98.9%, the second-highest rate in the state, with 1.1% of the population dropping out before completing high school. The LHS dropout rate is 1.5% below the state average 2.6%. The average daily student attendance rate is approximately 95% and the average attendance rate among teachers is 95.4%. Recognized by *U.S. News and World Report* in "Best High Schools" as ranked 27th in Connecticut (2013), LHS has a student-to-teacher ratio of 11:1.

Compared to the state average of \$14,134 and the DRG E average of \$14,349 for per pupil spending, Litchfield expends \$14,607 per pupil. The school budget comprises approximately 54% of the total town budget; 58% of local property taxes are allocated to the schools.

Students at Litchfield High School choose from over 100 course offerings including a wealth of electives in all content areas. In any given school year, up to fifteen Advanced Placement courses are offered. In addition, some students fulfill course requirements through accredited online programs. Through the advisory program, students connect with community and business leaders who offer advice insight into career options and workforce expectations. LHS maintains a partnership with Northwestern Connecticut Community College through which students can take courses for undergraduate credit while still attending high school. From the class of 2013, 79% of students pursued two-year, four-year, or technical programs; 5% of graduates entered the military, while 14% entered the workforce.

Students at Litchfield High School are afforded many educational and experiential opportunities that extend beyond school walls. Those in the performing arts are able to demonstrate their talents at a multitude of community events. Through partnerships with Oliver Wolcott Library, the Litchfield Historical Society, and the White Memorial Conservation Center, students apply skills and knowledge to extend their understanding of their greater communities. Education Connection, our local Regional Educational Service Center, offers courses and workshops for students and the community. The Litchfield Community Center, the Litchfield Area Business Association, Rotary International, the Litchfield Garden Club, the After

School Arts Program, and the Forman School Rainforest Project engage students in a variety of enrichment activities.

Litchfield High School regularly celebrates students' diverse successes and achievements. Each year, selected high students are inducted into school chapters of the National Honor Society, National Art Honor Society, and National Foreign Language Honor Society. High school students participate and compete in regional and local contests through the Technology Student Association, Envirothon, Future Business Leaders of America, and the Council of Language Teachers. The Mabry Awards, given annually to sophomores, juniors, and seniors, recognize excellence in music, art, and writing. The Litchfield Scholarship Association offers approximately \$300,000 annually to graduating seniors and post-graduates pursuing higher education. Students are recognized for their achievements in academics, athletics, service, and leadership at events such as the annual 8th grade Moving Up ceremony, the seasonal sports awards banquets, and the Celebration of Excellence program.

Core Values, Beliefs and Learning Expectations

The mission of the Litchfield High School community is to graduate college and/or career ready life-long learners within a safe, tolerant, and respectful environment. In collaboration with parents, educators, and the community, Litchfield High School students will prepare to actively participate in a global community and will develop as motivated, self-reliant, and ethical individuals.

Expectations for Student Learning

1. The student demonstrates proficiency and fluency in communication to meet the literacy demands of the global community.
2. The student uses technology effectively and responsively.
3. The student applies effective and efficient strategies for gathering information and materials, thinking critically, and solving problems.

Graduation Expectations

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

- communicate effectively
- solve problems effectively
- contribute to society
- apply technology appropriately
- make informed life choices

Introduction

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

Teaching and Learning Standards

- Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

- Curriculum

- Instruction

- Assessment of and for Student Learning

Support of Teaching and Learning Standards

- School Culture and Leadership

- School Resources for Learning

- Community Resources for Learning

The accreditation program for public schools involves a threefold process: the self-study conducted by the local professional staff, the on-site evaluation conducted by the Committee's visiting committee, and the follow-up program carried out by the school to implement the findings of its own self-study and the valid recommendations of the visiting

committee and those identified by the Committee in the Follow-Up process. Continued accreditation requires that the school be reevaluated at least once every ten years and that it show continued progress addressing identified needs.

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit - The School Self-Study

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At Litchfield High School, a committee of six members, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned all teachers and administrators in the school to appropriate subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities and facilities available for young people. In addition to faculty members, the self-study committees included parents, students, Board of Education members and non-certified staff members.

The self-study of Litchfield High School extended over a period of 21 school months from January 2013 to March 2015. The visiting committee was pleased to note that six parents, 24 students and nine out of nine Board of Education members joined the professional staff in the self-study deliberations.

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

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

The Process Used by the Visiting Committee

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

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 48 hours shadowing 16 students for a half day
- a total of 20 hours of classroom observation (in addition to time shadowing students)
- numerous informal observations in and around the school
- tours of the facility
- individual meetings with 32 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and the assessment of student learning
- group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers
- the examination of student work including a selection of work collected by the school

Each conclusion in the report was agreed to by visiting committee consensus. Sources of evidence for each

conclusion drawn by the visiting committee appear in parenthesis in the Standards sections of the report. The seven Standards for Accreditation reports include commendations and recommendations that in the visiting committee's judgment will be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning and to better meet Committee Standards.

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

Standard 1 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The Litchfield High School community engaged in a partially collaborative and inclusive process informed by current research-based best practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning. On April 12, 2012, the high school faculty and staff met for a full day of professional development to review and revise the mission statement, core values and beliefs, school-wide learning expectations and rubrics. On April 13, 2012, the faculty met with Dr. Tony Rigazio-DiGilio as noted on the professional development agenda. They utilized work by Charlotte Danielson and Dr. Robert Marzano to inform the process as well as used the NEASC guidebooks for developing core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. In May 2012, the board of education was notified of the changes to the mission statement. There is no evidence of meetings that include input from parents and students in regards to adopted mission statement, core values and learning expectations. The mission statement was adopted by the faculty in 2013. The results of the Endicott survey indicate that 69.6 percent of LHS students and 76.6 percent of the parents are familiar with Litchfield High School's core values and beliefs about learning. The survey also reflects that 80.3 percent of the LHS staff agrees that the school's core values and beliefs are clear to them. In interviews and student shadowing, students and parents had limited vocabulary in describing current 21st century learning expectations when asked; however, through many classroom observations in Spanish, math, science, and law, and in many discussions with students, it was evident that classroom instruction is led by 21st century skills. Generally, instruction led students to use technology appropriately, practice communication skills by reading, writing, speaking and listening. In some classroom observations, instruction also called for students to effectively gather information and to problem solve. When Litchfield High School engages in a collaborative process that includes students and parents to define their core values and beliefs, all members of the school community will have the opportunity to give input into and commit to these important principles.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- facility tour
- student work
- teacher interview
- students
- parents
- Endicott survey

Standard 1 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The school has challenging 21st century learning expectations for all students which address academic, social, and civic competencies. Rather than focus on specific subject areas, the expectations focus on three specific goals: 1. The student will demonstrate proficient and fluent communication to meet the modern, global community's literary demands; 2. The student will effectively and responsibly use technology; 3. The student will use efficient strategies to gather information and material, and he/she will also demonstrate an ability to think critically and solve problems. There are two civic or social learning expectations. Students are expected to contribute to society and to make informed life choices. School initiatives such as the Acts of Kindness Club and the Random Acts of Kindness Week suggest an inherent shared value upon such traits; as does the Interact Club which praises and supports ethical behavior and community connections. The school has established connections with the Greater Waterbury Interfaith Soup Kitchen, and actively hosts fundraisers and community service events. Such clubs and their advisors and mentors are representative of the overall school culture, despite the fact that such targeted civic and social expectations are not explicitly written. Of the three existing expectations, the first is broken down further in the following categories: reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. The faculty developed rubrics to target and assess these competencies, which indicate how students demonstrate "exceeding expectations, meeting expectations, meeting some expectations, or failing to meet expectations." They also have rubrics to assess students' efficient use of technology and their ability to gather information and materials, in addition to their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. One rubric alone is used to assess all of the following: 1. gathering information, 2. gathering materials, 3. thinking critically, and 4. solving problems. The school has not yet developed rubrics to assess civic and social expectations, despite the desire expressed in the mission statement to prepare students to "actively participate in a global community and develop as motivated, self-reliant, and ethical individuals." Student work samples display a variety of diverse rubrics that are department or assignment specific, but no use of school-wide rubrics. Information gleaned from teacher interviews indicates that teachers or departments reference the big ideas from school-wide rubrics in the creation of their own assignment-specific rubrics. Still, student and teacher interviews, as well as an analysis of student work, shows that sometimes school-wide rubrics are not used at all. Information from such previously described evidence sources, in conjunction with Litchfield's self-study, indicates that there is a need to update and use school-wide rubrics throughout all subject areas. In addition, an analysis of student work supported by follow-up interviews with teachers indicate that existing departmental and assignment rubrics do not use the same terminology. When the school revises current school-wide rubrics so that they can be used more effectively, students will have a tool to gauge their achievement of the 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- facility tour
- student work
- teacher interview
- students
- parents
- Endicott survey

Standard 1 Indicator 3

Conclusions

The school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations are actively reflected in the school's culture, drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in most classrooms, and guide school policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations. The Litchfield High School mission statement reflects the belief that the learning environment should be “safe, tolerant, and respectful.” This idea is seen in the instruction, curriculum, and everyday activities of the school as many programs promote a respectful and positive culture. For example, participation in a guidance-sponsored program called “Be Kind Action Day” demonstrates a positive school climate. Student writing assessments across disciplines highlight the acceptance and tolerance of different cultures, in addition to eliminating stereotypes and racism. LHS exhibits a sense of pride and respect throughout the school. Mutual respect amongst student, staff, and administration was evident in classroom observations and student shadowing. Peer-to-peer praise in addition to teacher- to-student praise is a common practice. The school community highlights student work, positive attitudes, encouragement, celebrations of athletic success, and a commitment to anti-bullying, and examples of these values is also seen throughout the hallways. Academically, the spirit of tolerance and acceptance is evidenced within the Litchfield High School English, Spanish, and social studies curricula, which have units centered on different cultures focusing on tolerance, understanding, and cultural acceptance. Students may be asked to write detailed lab reports, to create their own music, or to publish their prose and poetry in Vistas. The Google classroom is used in some classes, allowing for live teacher collaboration and peer-to-peer collaboration. The capstone project began three years ago as an elective for 12th graders and has evolved this year to include more vigorous self-assessment and reflection. Capstone will be required for student graduates in 2017. In addition, a Robotics class was introduced to the school last year as an elective that highlights 21st century learning skills. Students use self-assessments and reflections in many classrooms. Students who graduate from LHS have met the graduation expectations, which include contributing to society and making informed life choices. One student assessment asked students to research a specific vitamin and then inquired about their food choices in order to help them make informed life decisions. Students are involved in the anti-drug program, Project Purple which offers them options in making positive life decisions. Some LHS students work or volunteer at the Oliver Wolcott Library, the Litchfield Memorial Historical Society and the White Memorial Conservation Center. Freshman students begin researching college career choices in advisory. During advisories, students use self-reflection to assess their personal study skills and habits review.

Through common planning, teachers adjust instruction and curriculum to reflect 21st century skills. Eighty-two percent of staff members agree that they consider the school's core values and beliefs about learning when making important teaching decisions. The staff meets two days weekly and some Fridays they have Tech Talk, during which they share technological ideas and resources. Technological resources have been generous. To provide equal access for all students to the curriculum, LHS has placed great importance on technology. The board of education invested in a wireless network and a one-to-one device initiative, providing all middle school students and teachers with personal laptops and issuing tablets to all grades 9-12 students and teachers. From home, students can access daily work and assignments on teacher webpages. Flipped classrooms challenge students to take responsibility for their own learning, grades are posted electronically through PowerSchool, and textbooks in multiple subject areas are online. English and math departments have updated math and English curricula to adhere to the Common Core State Standards. This, too, is evolving as teachers continuously consider their students' changing needs. Currently, the budget has cut all professional development for teachers outside of the school. Teachers and staff must pay for any PD, so teachers rely on each other for expertise. There are no resources in place to help teachers review and disaggregate data. Fully embracing and embedding the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations and making them the driving force of all policy, procedures, and decision-making will optimize and enhance best practice learning strategies.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- student work
- teacher interview
- parents
- Endicott survey

Standard 1 Indicator 4

Conclusions

In a limited manner, the school reviews and revises its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, as well as on district and school community priorities. The school does not yet have a process or timeline for the consistent review and revision of its core values, beliefs, and learning expectations, although information gained from teacher and administrator interviews indicates a plan to begin doing so regularly. As part of their professional development time, faculty members researched and discussed the work of R. Marzano and other scholars. Teachers received copies of *A Handbook for Classroom Instruction that Works* and other content-specific books, and they have discussed their potential use in lesson planning and assessment. In addition, during common planning time, educators examine student achievement data. They also discuss curricula, teaching best practices, testing requirements, and other standards and assessments. All such initiatives and information will hopefully be used to regularly review and revise its chosen core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations, as they were used to devise a two-year and five-year targeted plan during the self-study process. Among the items listed in the two-year plan are the following: 1. Compile a list of 21st century skills that students are expected to master before graduation; 2. Increase funding for professional development; and 3. Develop a plan to ensure curriculum coordination and vertical alignment. The five-year targeted plan likewise has some initiatives that connect to the regular review and revision of values and expectations, such as embedding cross-disciplinary experiences in curriculum documents and developing a model for planning and implementing peer-led professional training. The school recognizes its need to review and update the core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations, and its staff understands that such initiatives are only possible with professional development, research, data analysis, and an assessment of school priorities and its connection to the surrounding community. By participating in an ongoing and formal process of revision for the school's core values and beliefs by all stakeholders, students are insured the inclusion of core values and 21st century learning expectations in all aspect of school experience.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 1 Commendations

Commendation

The dynamic, collaborative process informed by current research-based practices to identify and commit to core values and beliefs about learning

Commendation

The identification of challenging, measurable 21st century learning expectations for all students which address academic, social and civic competencies

Commendation

The creation of school-wide rubrics to measure the school's academic expectations

Commendation

The energy, enthusiasm, and dedication of students, faculty, and staff that reflect the core values and beliefs

Commendation

The incorporation of 21st century learning expectations into curriculum documents and classroom practice

Commendation

The expansion of the capstone project to include all students by 2017 which will enable students to demonstrate achievement of 21st century learning expectations

Commendation

The plan to regularly review and revise core values, beliefs, and learning expectations

Commendation

The commitment to exemplify the core values and beliefs by the faculty, students, parents, and school community

Standard 1 Recommendations

Recommendation

Establish a timeline to regularly review and revise core values, beliefs, and learning expectations, and ensure that all stakeholders are included in the process

Recommendation

Develop rubrics to assess civic and social learning expectations

Standard 2 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The Litchfield High School curriculum is deliberately designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Although the school has clearly identified 21st century learning expectations, these expectations are not always directly articulated in the written curriculum. There is ample evidence, however, that these skills are indirectly embedded in the curriculum. The core area curriculum guides identify connections between course content and the 21st century learning expectations, while multiple courses in multiple curricular areas offer learning experiences related to these learning expectations. The English curriculum contains written and oral analysis of text and the ethical use of technology. The science curriculum includes written analysis through lab reports, data collection, and problem solving. However, specific reference in the curriculum documents to the use of technology in physical science, world languages, and other electives is lacking. Social studies activities include analysis of information, fluency in communication, and responsive use of technology through the comparison and analysis of the life of various Pharaohs and their presentation via the Glogster platform. The business advertising and product design mock-up project further demonstrates responsive use of technology and fluency in communication. The social studies department demonstrates application of knowledge through fluent communication when applying knowledge of specific laws to current events. In Western Humanities class students practice listening, viewing, and speaking through presentations of Renaissance thinkers. Students who need additional support and practice of specific skills can further access the curriculum through flex-block labs and resource center time. Teachers report strong awareness of which learning expectations they are responsible for teaching. While it is evident that the curriculum is deliberately designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve the school's 21st century learning skills, updating the written curriculum to reflect the changes in technology integration and explicitly aligning all curriculum guides will ensure that these skills continue to drive instruction.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student work
- teacher interview
- central office personnel

Standard 2 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The curriculum is not yet written in a common format in which every document includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content and skills, the school's 21st century learning expectations, instructional strategies, and assessment practices using school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics. A 21st century skills school-wide rubric exists, and while departments have used different templates to revise curriculum, the 21st century skills are implicitly embedded in the curricula of all departments. However, the extent to which essential questions, instructional and assessment strategies are present varies greatly by department and even within departments. The anatomy and physiology curriculum guide contains essential questions while the chemistry template does not. Similarly, the language arts curriculum guides and the social studies course curriculum guides effectively articulate essential questions, but the latter does not include instructional strategies. Revisions necessitated by the advent of Common Core State Standards in English and math in 2011 have resulted in considerable alignment between those departments and social studies, which include essential questions, content, concepts, skills and assessment strategies. The science curriculum, however, omits essential questions and instructional strategies, while electives use a different template from the core courses and do not include essential questions or instructional strategies, although they do include concepts, content, skills, and assessment. The school does have curriculum guides for all subject areas which are posted on its website. With a common format and consistent components, the curriculum will ensure that the students and teachers successfully meet the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- school leadership

Standard 2 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Students of Litchfield High School are routinely challenged to deepen their understanding and to solve authentic problems, employing critical thinking skills, higher order thinking and use multiple forms of technology. An emphasis on depth of understanding and higher order thinking skills is pervasive across the curriculum, in both the middle and high schools. Of the 56 classes observed, 21 included evidence of higher order thinking. Although examples of problem solving were observed more frequently than independent inquiry, students were encouraged to use both critical thinking skills and technology to advance their understanding and learning. In an eighth grade math class, students were asked to problem solve using algebraic and geometric strategies. In a social studies law class, students applied their knowledge of types of crimes to current, real-world examples in the news. The curriculum for creative writing allows students to synthesize what they have learned about analysis and structure to produce formal and free-verse poetry, short stories, and creative non-fiction, culminating in the publication of a journal displaying student work. An eighth grade social studies class uses authentic learning opportunities through simulation of mummification. Honors geometry shows problem solving and authentic learning when applying geometric formulas to party planning and efficient use of space. Examples of informed, ethical, and creative uses of technology were observed in some areas. A business class project on marketing products demonstrated ethical use of technology as well as high order thinking as students defended technical choices made and marketing strategies employed. In an honors Spanish class at the high school, students passed around the computer mouse and used the classroom projector to translate Spanish-language news articles. As a result of the inclusion of problem solving, higher order thinking and authentic learning opportunities in the curriculum, students benefit from an education rich with deep understanding and application of the knowledge and skills they are learning.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student work
- teacher interview
- parents

Standard 2 Indicator 4

Conclusions

The written and taught curriculum at Litchfield High School are mostly aligned. On a daily basis, teachers are required to visually display the learning objectives from the curriculum in a know-understand-do format (KUD). This was observed in many, but not all classrooms. In honors geometry, the written curriculum is taught through a problem-solving activity using right triangles and polygons. In order to maintain consistency between the written and taught curriculum, teachers engage in common planning time (CPT) two or more times each week for the continual discussion of curriculum and instructional development. CPT is instrumental in facilitating these discussions and for assisting new teachers in meeting the curriculum guidelines. Teachers who share courses are able to coordinate their efforts assuring that the course content and formative and summative assessments are consistent. For example, art teachers meet at least twice a week to review their consistent approach to teaching and evaluating students in the 2D Art Foundations course. Midterm and final exams are common departmental assessment tools that ensure the delivery of curricular goals. An ongoing curriculum revision and clarification process has been in place within departments for several years, although this is not scheduled or programmatic. In addition, in announced, formal observations of all faculty members, teachers are required to identify learning objectives and 21st century learning skills that stem from the written curriculum and that will be achieved during the lesson. While all departments have living documents like syllabi, course outlines and summer curriculum revision opportunities, when the school formalizes a way of ensuring the written curriculum is the taught curriculum it will guarantee access for all students to a common researched-based experience.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 2 Indicator 5

Conclusions

There is evidence of effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district. Within the past five years, a complete K-12 curriculum revision was completed. Also, through curriculum coordinators and building level teams, math and English courses were aligned to Common Core State Standards. Each content area at the school has a coordinator who leads that department and ensures that curriculum is aligned. LHS does not hold formal curriculum meetings with leaders or teachers of its sending school during the school day because of the challenge of school schedules. However, leaders and teachers create informal ways of communicating vertical alignment, such as email and meetings within content areas. In addition, changes to the written curriculum occur during paid summer time and this often includes teachers in a content area from multiple grade levels. The strongest evidence of vertical articulation comes in the areas of grades 7-12 English, grades 4-12 world languages, and grades 7-12 math. The language arts thesis chart and leads chart clearly identify expectations for elements of writing through the grade levels 7-12. The revision of the Spanish curriculum to include uniform standards for the use of language from grades 4-12 is another strong example of vertical articulation of curriculum. In the technical education department, the curriculum coordinator facilitates the implementation of the Perkins Grant funds. All curriculum coordinators participate in the dissemination of funding for summer curriculum work across departments based on revision and vertical alignment needs. However, for students who will experience extensive use of technology in their classes at Litchfield High School, including their own devices through the 1:1 program, there is no provision in lower or middle grades for preparatory training in its basic use. While there is evidence of strong curricular coordination in the content areas 7-12, when the schools formalize a program for alignment of curriculum across disciplines and with sending schools in the district, students will make smoother curricular transitions from building to building and grade to grade.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- parents
- department leaders

Standard 2 Indicator 6

Conclusions

Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center of Litchfield High School are sufficient to implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. Through classroom observations, observable and reported class sizes ranged from as low as four to as many as 18, with the largest disparity present between the middle school and the high school classes. Teachers and students report that in the high school, class sizes are sufficient for full implementation of the curriculum, while at the middle school, larger classes somewhat impede full implementation of curricular goals. The district budgeted approximately \$21,000 this year for purchase and/or rebinds of textbooks, including e-textbooks. Spending on instructional supplies alone was at approximately \$30,000, including support for art and music programs, robotics, construction, laboratory sciences and consumer science. With the implementation of the student 1:1 program, students have excellent access to technology, and teachers have effective tools for implementing the curriculum. While the technology infrastructure and hardware is prolific at LHS, the lack of direct instructional time or exposure for use of technology limits teachers' and students' ability to fully access the learning opportunities afforded them through these technologies. Also, while the spending for technology resources is more than adequate, teachers report challenges accessing funds for traditional print materials and supplemental materials. The school hosts a wide array of well-supported co-curricular activities for students, including 14 boys' and girls' sports and 18 clubs. Students report that such activities as fan buses help nurture the small-town, family-like atmosphere of the school. The strong support for curricular and co-curricular programs at Litchfield High School allows students to successfully achieve not only their learning expectations but also contributes to their ability to make informed life choices in a caring environment.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- facility tour
- teachers
- parents
- school board
- central office personnel
- school leadership

Standard 2 Indicator 7

Conclusions

The district generally provides Litchfield High School's professional staff with sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research. Between 2011 through 2014, the district committed \$47,700 to fund over a thousand hours of professional and curriculum development district-wide, with the overwhelming majority of it targeted to revising and updating the curriculum. The Endicott survey indicates that 62.3 percent of the staff agrees that sufficient time is provided to be engaged in formal curriculum evaluation and revision. However, the development of the curriculum at LHS is an ongoing process with no specific cycle to re-evaluate curriculum, with updates overseen by the principal made on an as-needed basis. Each department has its own curriculum coordinator and meets during CPT to discuss the implementation of curriculum, along with any needed revisions. Additionally, the coordinators meet with administration twice a month. As departments determine necessary curriculum revisions, time is allotted during CPT for minor changes. Teachers report using AP and SAT data to determine if curriculum revisions are warranted. For significant revisions, funding is provided for teachers to work during the summer or teachers are given release time during the school day. As a result of the sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing evaluation and revision of curriculum, students can be assured well-planned lessons and units that align with standards and incorporate 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teachers
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

Standard 2 Commendations

Commendation

The purposeful design of the curriculum which includes 21st century learning skills and provides students with ample opportunities to develop these skills

Commendation

The emphasis on depth of understanding and application of knowledge in the curriculum

Commendation

The sufficient staffing, instructional materials, technology, and supplies to support student and teacher needs

Commendation

The alignment of the written and taught curriculum

Commendation

The development of curriculum guides for each subject area

Commendation

The effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation within Litchfield High School

Commendation

The efforts of the curriculum coordinators to align curriculum across the school

Commendation

The time and financial resources dedicated to ongoing and collaborative development of curriculum

Commendation

The provision of 1:1 technology for students which is used to enhance the curriculum in most classes

Commendation

The provision of common planning time to ensure coordination and alignment of curriculum

Standard 2 Recommendations

Recommendation

Develop and implement a process to ensure that the curriculum is written in a common format that includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content aid skills; the school's 21st century learning expectations; instructional strategies; and assessment practices including the use of school-wide rubrics

Recommendation

Provide additional time for teachers from Litchfield Intermediate School to meet with middle and high school departments for curricular coordination

Recommendation

Provide teachers with professional time and training to fully integrate use of technology into their curriculum and instructional practice

Recommendation

Plan and implement a program for peer observation among teachers beginning within departments and evolving to cross-curricular observation and integration

Standard 3 Indicator 1

Conclusions

Most teachers continuously examine their instructional practices in order to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations. The teachers use the recently revised core values and beliefs about learning to guide and influence current instruction. In addition, teachers are highly reflective of their practice both formally and informally. Teacher interviews highlight the fact that conversations, which take place after formal observations between teachers and their supervisors, tend to include reflective dialogue during the evaluation process. Also, teachers from subject-specific departments take it upon themselves to discuss their instructional practices during their common planning and prep time. Often these conversations are informal, but usually start from readings and research shared by their peers, administrators, and department leaders. While neither the faculty nor the students could fully articulate how the core values and beliefs align with instructional practice, the vast majority of classroom observations yield a strong connection of teaching practice and 21st century learning expectations. For example, during a classroom observation, a science teacher placed students in small groups to use each other as resources to create action plans in order to complete the lab activity. When asked about the learning expectations they are responsible for teaching, teachers frequently identified 21st century learning expectations. During informal observations, the majority of classes showed evidence of higher order thinking and use of critical thinking skills. In a chemistry class, the teacher had small groups of students create problems related to stoichiometry. These higher order thinking problems were then given to other groups to solve. This reflects strong ties to collaboration, communication, and problem-solving skills, which are all highlights of the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations. In teacher interviews, teachers cited critical thinking, writing, and communication as the skills most central to their curricula, showing an understanding of the school's core values. There is evidence that instructional practices reflect the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations of the school; however, when a more transparent connection between these expectations and teacher instructional practice exist, students will connect what they are learning in the classroom to these important goals.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- teachers
- students

Standard 3 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Teachers' instructional practices frequently support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by often personalizing instruction; sometimes engaging students in cross-disciplinary learning; often engaging students as active and self-directed learners; frequently emphasizing inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking; sometimes applying knowledge and skills to authentic tasks; frequently engaging students in self-assessment and reflection and informally integrating technology. Frequent examples of personalized instruction were observed, from examples as small as student choice in a project or essay topic, to an open-ended inquiry project offered in the social studies department. Based on student shadowing, teacher interviews and in-class observations, teachers consciously personalize instruction for both individual and groups of students. A special education teacher in the middle school stated that most classes have a great teacher-to-student ratio, allowing teachers to give and access immediate/direct feedback, which allows them to modify their approach with students. In psychology class, students rated their sleep and analyzed the data to determine which time of day they felt most alert. Formative assessments allow many of the teachers to modify their practice and to personalize instruction toward the students' needs. Members of the Instruction Standard Committee were able to identify that teachers recognize and address student learning modalities by personalizing instruction. By integrating personalized instruction varying from spatial, kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, linguistics and logical-mathematical learning, students are able to demonstrate knowledge and skill using Gardner's Multiple Intelligences. The Endicott survey provides insightful data in terms of personalizing instruction. For example, 72 percent of students agree that their teachers use varying strategies to address the needs of all students, while 90 percent of teachers agree with the same statement. Furthermore, while 90 percent of teachers feel that they personalize instruction, 90 percent of parents agree with them, but only 37 percent of students agree with the statement. In addition, students are frequently encouraged to visit their teachers or labs for additional assistance and personalized instruction. The school's schedule, which includes a flex period, allows for one-on-one and small group instruction. Also, seniors at the high school are allowed to pursue their personal interests with a capstone project/internship during their senior year. During committee meetings, the teacher who oversees the capstone program said that approximately 33 percent of the senior class takes part in this opportunity. Next year, it will be a requirement for all seniors next year. While completing the capstone project, students finalize plans, set daily goals, reflect, and present about their learning experiences. Cross-disciplinary learning sometimes occurs. In the middle school, students study aligned topics in social studies, math, science and language arts. Students complete a project where they read *Chains in Language Arts*, study the Colonial Era in social studies, design quilts in math class, and create era-specific machines in science. In 8th grade, students complete an Egyptian tombs project that includes using transformations in math class, identifying five artifacts in language arts class and designing era-specific machines in science class. Students identified how learning to analyze primary source documents in 7th grade social studies is a skill that transfers to other disciplines, namely language arts, where it "helps you to see the motives of different characters," and it is "a way to understand things and a way to solve problems." Additionally, 10th grade students see connections when they study the Elizabethan time period in social studies while reading Shakespeare's plays in language arts, and learning about fossil fuels as energy sources in science class, while discussing the social impact of oil sources in the Middle East in social studies classes. Students frequently demonstrate self-directed and active learning. In grade 12, students may choose to complete a capstone project, in which they choose a topic, write essential questions, conduct research and present their findings. In the case of a senior in Exercise Science class, the student designed a workout plan to improve his running and maintain his strength in order to prepare for Plebe Summer. In Computerized Music class, students create radio commercials, perform and record an original script, or sequence appropriate music to enhance the commercial Garage Band software. Students frequently use inquiry-based learning. According to the panel presentation, students in technology education classes create floor plans, build devices, and learn to use advanced technologies. Skill development goes beyond knowledge acquisition, frequently approaching the highest levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Students in social studies classes simulate the spreading of endemic diseases and examine the economic, political, and social impact of such catastrophes. In business, science, and math courses, students are challenged to think critically about theories and practices and then apply their learning in practical ways. Students in humanities courses engage in discourse about literature, informational text, art, and music through the use of the Socratic seminar, or by critical analysis, or through peer review of their own work and the work of others. Many classrooms had the daily objectives of the

day written on the board and higher level extensions in the form of enduring understandings. It is evident that teachers spend sufficient time on developing their units and allowing their students to pursue the concepts in greater depth. Students are given many opportunities to apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks. For example, in Practical Law class, students were asked to research recent crimes and to identify what charges would be levied against the accused. They were also required to justify the criminal charges they selected. Students in tech ed classes construct Adirondack chairs which they sell to members of the community, while students conducting labs in science classes are often dealing with practical, hands-on scenarios. Students publish their original poems, short stories, and artwork in *Vistas of Litchfield*, a creative writing journal. The capstone project is another example of this. Collaboration with community institutions such as the Oliver Wolcott Library, the Litchfield Historical Society, White Memorial Conservation Center, the Litchfield Area Business Association, Rotary International, the Litchfield Garden Club, the After School Arts Program, Infinity Hall in Norfolk and the Forman School Rainforest Project allow students to have a hands-on experience. Students and teachers alike report frequent informal self-assessments in classes. Teachers may ask students to grade themselves using a copy of the same rubric that the teacher uses. In band, students self-assess informally during sectional time; language arts teachers may use peer review with the opportunity for reflection and revision. Special education teachers implemented the use of self advocacy calendars in which students document their progress moving toward their goals. In reviewed student work, there were many examples of students being asked to reflect on their work in classes such as culinary arts, English, and science. In math classes, students journal to self-assess their progress with the skills they are learning. As a result of the one-to-one laptop initiative two years ago, each student carries a laptop or tablet computer, which most teachers have integrated into their instruction. Most of the observed use of technology in the classroom was in substitution for traditional instructional practices such as note-taking, looking at a textbook online, filling out a worksheet online or for projecting information on the board. Some teachers use more interactive forms of technology in the classroom, including Twitter, Facebook, Edmodo, Google Docs, Drop Box, student share folders, One Note, and Prezi for presentations and instruction. For example, a science teacher used Google Classroom to enhance instruction while conducting a lab activity, and teachers in technology education and English used Google Classroom to give students timely feedback on individual assignments. Students problem solving in groups were receiving feedback from the teacher using their laptops. The implementation of technology in this case characterizes collaboration, problem solving, and critical thinking which enhances the lesson above simple substitution. In technology education classes, students create floor plans, build devices, and learn to use advanced technologies. In business, technology education, and music classrooms and in the library media center, students have access to programs and tools such as a 3-D printer, video production equipment, and a Makerspace. While there is an expectation that all teachers use technology to enhance instruction, teachers cite the need for professional development toward instructional practices utilizing technology at a higher level. Based on teacher and student interviews, it is evident that many teachers are having their students use their device to research an array of topics and then work in small groups to develop and create presentations. These presentations are personalized and can come in multiple formats. These decisions are made by the students depending on conversations with their groups and individual learning styles. Students were able to illustrate this in Humanities class, for example, where they were able to choose which product would best portray an historical event with the greatest impact on the Western world. The students appreciated the freedom to select the path that their groups took to research the given topic. Some students were able to create physical models from computer generated plans, while others recorded videos to display to the class. There is a spectrum of use and level of technology in the classrooms. As teachers personalize instruction, engage in intentional cross-disciplinary learning, engage students as active and self-directed learners, consistently emphasize inquiry, problem solving, and higher-order thinking, integrate technology more substantially into the delivery of instruction and student learning as well as apply their knowledge and skills to authentic tasks in the classroom, students will continue to have engaging classroom experiences. (classroom observations, teachers, students, self-study, student work)

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student work
- teachers
- students

Standard 3 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Teachers frequently adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by using formative assessment, especially during instructional time; sometimes strategically differentiating; purposefully organizing group learning activities; and always providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom. Plenty of evidence of formative assessment exists, ranging from exit tickets to more substantial check-ins during a unit. Teachers across all disciplines use formative assessment, according to students. In 8th grade social studies, students practice citing sources and analytical skills in a formative assessment that asks them to write a letter from the perspective of a Civil War soldier. In Exercise Science, students evaluate their peers' shooting form in a formative assessment during the study of archery. The math department employs a grading rationale that emphasizes the distinction between formative and summative assessment. The social studies and language arts departments often use exit tickets to assess student learning. The science department employs the use of frequent quizzes to measure content mastery, as well as verbal and written assessments during and after lab experiments to assess student understanding. Special education teachers regularly meet with regular education teachers to design strategies that differentiate instruction, modify assessments, and monitor student progress during common planning time. In a team-taught seventh grade math class, a formative assessment before the lesson on sequencing checked for both abstract and concrete comprehension. The results were used to identify which teaching practices would be used with students. In another math class, formative assessments on rationals and radical denominators allow teachers to do a quick check, provide individual feedback, and differentiate appropriately.

Teachers were frequently observed intentionally grouping and pairing students. In English IV, students worked in teacher-organized groups to discuss various elements of the text they were reading. Students cite the frequency with which teachers ask them to work in groups and pairs. Teachers go above and beyond to provide additional support within the regular education classroom. They were frequently observed conducting informal check-ins with students, allowing students to ask questions and make clarifications. Students, parents, and teachers all mentioned how dedicated the faculty is with regard to accessibility after school and during flex time. It was clear that any student who struggles would have no shortage of help available to him or her. Several students said, "It's hard to fail here," referring to the amount of support students have available. Because teachers adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by using formative assessment to inform their instruction, differentiating learning, and providing additional support, students are able to achieve at a higher level because learning is personalized to meet their needs. (self-study, classroom observations, teacher interviews, teachers, students, parents)

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents

Standard 3 Indicator 4

Conclusions

Teachers, individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices by using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments; occasionally examining student work; always using feedback from a variety of sources, including students, other teachers, supervisors, and parents; often examining current research; and informally engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice. Litchfield High School teachers are required to meet at least twice a week after school for 30 minutes. The teachers' meetings are department based for common planning time. In addition to after-school meetings, middle school teachers have daily meetings with grade-level teams. Although there is no formal practice for examining student data, teachers cite the use of common planning time to sometimes analyze data. The use of both formative and summative assessments is also discussed to gauge student achievement. Discussions based on assessment data occur at the start of a school year when teachers are writing their SLOs and follow midterm examinations. School-wide rubrics are not used regularly to assess student work, but many teachers and students cited the use of specific department based rubrics to evaluate student work. A survey designed by the Instruction Standard Committee reports that 80 percent of teachers attest that school-wide rubrics are not used for instruction. However, the science department meets to discuss the implementation of newly updated department-wide lab rubrics. Also, 80 percent of the staff reports that they use their students' assessment data to drive their instruction. Teachers cite the schedule as a barrier to meeting with teachers outside of their departments. Many teachers are responsible for teaching all of the students in a particular grade or class, negating the possibility to meet with colleagues to discuss common assessment data. Informally, teachers will collaborate with others outside of their departments to plan interdisciplinary units. While not a perfect process, it demonstrates an attempt to meet across disciplines and enhance the themes between courses. Both teachers and students cite the use of student feedback to modify instruction. During an in-class observation of a science class this was clearly on display. The students, who were working independently, were connected with their teacher via Google Classroom. There was constant communication between the students and teacher who would assist or offer more clarification based on the feedback they received from students. An English teacher reported ongoing communication with the students through email during the writing process. The email chain includes drafts with teacher feedback allowing students the opportunity to ask questions and communicate with their teacher throughout the writing process. The teachers who use Google Classroom are able to give students live feedback during the writing process. In another science class, the teacher mentioned the students' request for "less lecture," with which he complied. Teachers in the high and middle school frequently gather student and parent feedback. Surveys given to parents at the end of the year and in-class surveys allow for student reflection, but there is no school-wide or formal process to collect feedback from students or parents. Open dialogue is ongoing with students and staff and teachers who willingly make adjustments to instruction based on verbal feedback from students. Although there is a two- and five-year plan in place to begin peer observations of classes, no formal practice exists yet. It is evident that reflection and analysis of student and parent feedback does take place; however, the informal process does not ensure that feedback is accepted as an important component to instructional improvement. Teachers do have the opportunity to examine current research. They have access to a professional learning library, housed within the school's student library. This collection boasts several shelves of resources, which the librarian says teachers use frequently. Teachers mentioned the title *Make Just One Change* as an example of a recent book that the whole faculty has read. When teachers use student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments; consistently examine student work; engage in professional discourse and examine current research; use feedback from a variety of sources, including students, other teachers, supervisors and parents; and engage in professional discourse, instruction will improve so that students will benefit from best instructional practices.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students

Standard 3 Indicator 5

Conclusions

Teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, often maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices; however, much of this learning is provided using personal funds and by their own initiative. Teachers cite one example of professional development during which they viewed and then critiqued examples of various types of instruction. Other recent professional development opportunities include attendance at the CT Art Education Conference (attended by teachers from Related Studies and English), TEAM Mentor Training, and Dr. Debra Pickering's Formative Assessment and Grading Practices that Motivate and Evaluate workshop. While these are examples of professional development opportunities funded by the district, much professional development happens informally between teachers when they engage in dialogue with their peers and supervisors. Common planning time allows teachers to reflect upon their practices and to develop improved instructional techniques. These discussions range from content-specific strategies for improving instruction to issues surrounding relatively new initiatives like the one-to-one technological device program. While the opportunity for professional development exists, due to recent budgetary concerns, there has been less district money allotted for professional development outside the district; the majority of professional memberships for teachers have been cut, and while teachers have attended conferences and other trainings over the last several years, their frequency has waned. For example, world languages teachers were able to attend both the Connecticut Organization of Language Teachers Annual Conference and the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Language Conference, but membership in these organizations is funded by the individual teacher. Teachers have begun to utilize Education Connection to gain professional development toward the TEAM mentor program, Common Core State Standards, and the Smarter Balanced standardized test. Also, teachers interviewed report that they would like more professional development on instruction, especially in terms of technology. As a result of the staff's commitment to maintaining professional expertise, the students at Litchfield High School receive quality instruction from qualified teachers.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 3 Commendations

Commendation

The teachers' commitment to be reflective about their instructional practices both formally and informally

Commendation

The varied instructional practices which support achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations

Commendation

The district's investment in instructional technology, including the one-to-one technology initiative

Commendation

The emphasis on inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking in many classes

Commendation

The supportive learning environment that teachers establish for their students

Commendation

The use of formative assessments to guide best practice and student learning

Commendation

The faculty's willingness to engage in professional discourse with colleagues

Commendation

The use of planning time and common planning time to improve instructional practices

Commendation

The commitment and expertise of teachers within their content area

Standard 3 Recommendations

Recommendation

Create more explicit connections between instructional practice and the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations

Recommendation

Provide additional time and funding for technology support and professional development regarding technology integration for teachers

Recommendation

Increase emphasis on career readiness by creating more school-to-career opportunities

Recommendation

Create formalized plan for teachers to discuss, review, and bring into practice current research and best practice related to instruction

Recommendation

Increase the use of feedback data from various sources such as administrators and parents to improve daily classroom instruction

Recommendation

Create opportunities for teachers to observe and reflect upon peers' instructional practice

Recommendation

Provide additional funding for professional development opportunities for teachers

Recommendation

Examine the need to provide funding for professional memberships for teachers

Standard 4 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The professional staff does not yet employ a formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. According to the Endicott survey, only 24.6 percent of teachers report that they use the school-wide rubrics when assessing student work. This indicates a low level of commitment to incorporate school-wide rubrics across the school; however, students and teachers report a high use of classroom and content-specific rubrics. The faculty developed school-wide rubrics to target and assess learning expectations. These rubrics assess students' efficient use of technology and their ability to gather information and materials, in addition to their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. While teachers work to assess and embed 21st century skills in their classroom activities, lesson plans, and assessments, there is not a formal process for evaluating student progress in achieving these expectations using school-wide rubrics. The revision of current school-wide rubrics and the implementation of school-wide rubrics is an ongoing need. When consistent expectations and feedback based on school-wide rubrics are provided, students' ability to measure and understand their growth in the development of learning expectations will increase.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

Standard 4 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The school's professional staff periodically communicates individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to students and their families and the school community. Only 47 percent of parents reported on the Endicott survey that they are provided with an explanation of their child's progress in achieving school-wide 21st century expectations. Most students and parents surveyed are unaware of the school-wide 21st century learning expectations. Most parents, however, are satisfied with the level of communication regarding individual student performance. Although parents receive academic reports through PowerSchool, they have little to no communication specifically in regard to their child's progress within the 21st century learning expectations. For each board of education (BOE) meeting, parents and community members have access to schedules, agendas, and minutes. In BOE meetings, 21st century skills were discussed as LHS moved to one-to-one computing and standards for technology were a part of an ongoing discussion. A link to the Litchfield Public Schools Board of Education Action Plan for 2010-2015 is available online. Testing and assessment reports are available as a link on the Litchfield Public Schools' Central Office website. Although 21st century learning expectations are taught in many of the classes, communication of these expectations is not consistent. There was evidence of these skills in a Western Humanities class in which the teacher incorporated use of technology, effective communication, and writing. Students gave ninety second presentations on the biographies of an early scientist. The assignment demonstrated evidence of clear communication skills, public speaking, writing skills, and use of technology (PowerPoint). In the Advance Web Design class, students were using Photoshop, Dreamweaver, and Illustrator software programs to create websites. The students followed sequential directives from the teacher. A few classrooms explicitly communicated 21st century skill expectations within their assessment practices. Teachers in world languages have an expectation that students communicate clearly using the spoken world language, teachers in math and science courses emphasize problem solving and inquiry-based learning within many assessments (i.e., homework or lab reports). However, students stated that they apply and utilize technological skills inconsistently. Students stated that some teachers emphasize technological skills whereas a few do not allow technological devices in their classroom. Lastly, the school counseling staff regularly meets with students to help them make informed life choices about college and career readiness using Naviance. In addition to this, school leaders expect that students will become "good citizens in the global workforce." Parents and students are inconsistently aware of the school's 21st century learning objectives. When a more formal process for clear and consistent communication of individual student progress toward 21st century learning expectations is provided for students, families, and the school community, progress in these areas will be more evident.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 4 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Professional staff informally collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement. Data is collected through student learning objectives (SLOs). Each department utilizes regular benchmarks and common assessments and the data generated is examined within a portion of the common planning time (CPT). Within teachers' student learning objectives (SLOs), data is utilized in order to move students toward a higher standard on course-specific performance rubrics. A variety of assessments are used to obtain SLO baseline data, such as pre-assessments, CMT/CAPT results, career and technology education (CTE) test results, and formative and summative assessments. As part of the Litchfield educator evaluation process, teachers maintain student performance records and chart student growth for their end-of-year evaluation. Despite having no formal data teams or data analysis protocol, many teachers still analyze data results to respond to inequities in their classroom achievement. In the Western Humanities course, students use pre- and post-assessments to measure growth and chart individualized goals. In Spanish class, data is charted in the mastery of speech, in order to improve student performance. In physical education, students use baseline data from a strength test to create action steps for an individualized fitness plan. Some teachers gather informally to disaggregate and analyze data during common planning time (CPT), grade level meetings, SIT, and the Scientific Research-Based Intervention (SRBI) process. Although most teachers do not currently use common planning time to examine student work, teachers have expressed the willingness to do so; a few teachers started that data examination process on their own initiative. The social studies and English teachers have examined writing results to craft interdisciplinary writing standards. Teachers who teach the same section of a course examine assessment results. The biology courses often compare achievement results across ability-level groups. However, often times, teachers who teach "singletons" do not have ample opportunities to measure their results against school-wide performance data. A formal data collection and analysis process does exist within the Scientific Research-Based Intervention (SRBI) process. As part of the SRBI process, teachers submit and gather data to address achievement gaps and to initiate an intervention plan. Teacher referrals and feedback forms support decisions to move students into more structured support systems to ensure learning expectations are met. Depending on a student's level of need, he/she is moved in or out of a variety of support systems. Some include academic resource center (ARC), peer tutoring, and subject-area labs. In order to address inequities in achievement, students have many opportunities to access extra help during the flex periods. Administrative staff collects and analyzes PSAT data and several teachers analyze SAT data to improve achievement results. School leaders are aware of achievement inequities between special education and regular education classes and are creating a plan to help close the achievement gap. In addition, the BOE members discuss standardized achievement results to respond to inconsistencies. They analyzed AP scores to examine alignment with course grades. When teachers have a more formal process to collect, disaggregate, and analyze data they will better be able to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- school board
- department leaders

Standard 4 Indicator 4

Conclusions

There is an infrequent practice of communicating unit-specific 21st century learning expectations to students in the classroom. Prior to each unit of study, some teachers communicate to students the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed. There is evidence of 21st century learning expectations communicated to the students, but is not consistent through all disciplines. The social studies and science departments explicitly reference 21st century learning expectations in many units of study. Within units of study, objectives and Common Core Standards for learning are presented to students. The AP Spanish Language and Culture course has evidence of essential questions, class activities in listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills. Many of the syllabi learning goals and skills that will be assessed per unit are posted in curriculum documents on the Litchfield High School website. Many teachers utilize "know-understand-do" in order to address learning expectations, but do not explicitly communicate which 21st century learning skills apply to instructional practices. Without clear communication of school-wide 21st century learning expectations, students are unable to establish a cognitive context supporting their development of the defined learning skills.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- teachers
- parents

Standard 4 Indicator 5

Conclusions

Prior to summative assessments, a majority of teachers provide students with corresponding rubrics. According to the Endicott survey, 84.2 percent of students agree that they understand what work they have to accomplish in order to meet the expectations of the teacher. In addition, 85 percent of students stated that they are provided with rubrics prior to completing summative assessments. A majority of parents reported that they are familiar with and understand the analytic rubrics teachers use to assess student learning. In science classes, students understand inquiry expectations for their lab reports, and students have been assessed with the same criteria from grades 7-10. Before starting lab experiments, students read and review the standards for lab reports. In the world languages department, students receive rubrics for written and spoken assignments before beginning an activity such as a writing a creative dialogue or completing a translation task. In the exercise science course, students are provided with a rubric for each component of their portfolio including sections like cover page, weekly journals, and selection of artifacts. In algebra courses, students are given a rubric before beginning homework assignments based a three-point scale for errors in computation. Also, in the 8th grade mathematics course, students have the extended response rubric before the date of the test. Many teachers attach an electronic version of the rubric to online gradebooks like English expository and argumentative writing rubrics, global studies synthesis and argumentative writing rubrics, and world languages speaking and writing rubrics. For most summative writing assessments, students are provided with standards for thesis or controlling idea development, evidence, conventions, and organization before rough drafts are completed and submitted. In the public speaking course, students completed an informative speech assignment. Before the day of the presentation, students reviewed standards for content, organization, and delivery. In a majority of the courses, students are given a rubric along with assignment directions. As a result of being given rubrics prior to summative assessments, students are provided with clear expectations across most levels and disciplines, which allows them to achieve greater success.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- teachers
- Endicott survey

Standard 4 Indicator 6

Conclusions

In each unit of study, teachers often employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments. Revisions, retakes, and self-assessments are a regular part of many courses. However, the grading process for these additional opportunities for success varies. Some teachers replace former grades for revised work and others will add a few points to the overall score. Some formative and summative assessments have an inconsistent approach to how points are distributed between courses. Despite the inconsistent grading standards within assessments, teachers work to offer multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate success. Summative assessments include written quizzes and tests, lab reports, essays, portfolios, and online homework quizzes, but their frequency is inconsistent across disciplines. One course may have three summative assessments per marking period while another has six summative assessments. There is consistency within full-year courses as all have a mid-year examination and an end-of-year examination. Student Success Plans (portfolios) are being used in the English department. These portfolios contain all written summative assessments. Within the English courses, students are given opportunities to demonstrate understanding beyond the traditional essay. Students create multimedia presentations of the Globe Theater, share design plans and draft proposals for a location selection. Students in many courses research and present PowerPoint presentations on various topics like literary movements, historical eras, and scientific terms. Students also have opportunities to artistically display their understanding. Within a science course, student create a children's book of their understanding of DNA. Students write for a younger audience in order to reveal their understanding of the basic components of DNA. In a 2D Art Foundation course, students create a thumbnail sketch and create a final product that incorporates visual and painting components. Beyond being assessed in artistic and creative forms, students have ample opportunities within the same course to synthesize and create authentic products. In a U.S. history course, students analyze a series of primary documents including political cartoons in order to take a stance on an issue. Within the same course, students were to "become" President Coolidge's advisor on legislation that was being considered by Congress. In a world languages course, students label visuals, complete fill-in-the-blank sentences, listen to audio recordings of the spoken selection, speak the language, and ultimately, complete a summative assessment on their learning. In a science course, students were to label the parts of the human eye. Then, students had to dissect a "beef eye" and answer a variety of questions relating to the function of different parts. For the past few years, school leadership has emphasized formative assessments as a part of the evaluation process. Out of 56 class observed, most classes had formative assessments within their daily instructional activities. Students stated they are assessed through quizzes, vocabulary tests for different content areas, multimedia projects, and creative projects such as an "ofrenda" in Spanish class as a "Day of the Dead" tribute to historical people like Frida Kahlo. Students feel they are offered multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning in diverse ways such being able to "draw the brain in order to identify and label sections." As a result of the range of assessment strategies in every course, students exhibit their understanding of the curriculum through a variety of assessments, ensuring multiple opportunities for student success and mastery of content.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- teachers

Standard 4 Indicator 7

Conclusions

Teachers informally collaborate on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments. According to the Endicott survey, teachers meet formally to discuss and improve both formative and summative assessment strategies, 72.1 percent (44) of the teachers agree, 21.3 percent (13) disagrees, and 6.6 percent (4) is undecided. Teachers collaborate in small groups within their departments several days a week for thirty minutes during CPT. There is a schedule for school meetings in the handbook, for the departments, curriculum coordinators, and faculty meet to discuss student work, curriculum, assessments, and instruction, most times informally, and not across disciplines or in whole departments. These meeting times are often used as informative meetings and as time to collaborate on meaningful assessment tasks is infrequent. The process is ongoing in each department as teachers are beginning to analyze data, compare goals, evaluate methods and measurements, and improve assessment tools. Some teachers and departments spend time during CPT or other mutually agreed-upon times to work on cross-curricular assessments. The social studies and the English departments often collaborate to create assessments and rubrics to measure standards for argumentative writing. All departments meet regularly during CPT meetings to collaborate on instructional strategies and curricular topics, but collaboration on the creation and revision of common assessments is infrequent. As a school-wide effort, a state grant was awarded to help LHS examine, implement, and improve formative and summative assessment practices. When more formal collaboration on the creation, analysis, and revision of assessment exists, teachers will be able to benefit from the feedback of their colleagues to improve student learning through assessment.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- central office personnel
- school leadership

Standard 4 Indicator 8

Conclusions

All teachers provide both verbal and written feedback consistently and in a timely manner. The English department holds conferences to discuss written performance and offers feedback on drafts during the writing process. Students review teacher commentary, participate in peer editing, and self-reflection to inform their final product. Math teachers review test results with the class and opportunities for retakes are offered to measure performance growth. Social studies teachers break up large writing assignments into smaller sections and offer feedback at critical junctures along the way. Many classes offer peer-editing and group work as a way to monitor and deliver feedback to students. According to teacher interviews, several teachers are starting to utilize Google Classroom as a way to offer immediate and timely feedback to students on their performance. Since LHS uses PowerSchool, students are able to monitor their performance in any academic class. Although teachers are required to post a minimum of eight times a year, teachers post grades more frequently, and students report that they know their grade in each class. The frequency of posting grades varies among teachers, and a few students reported that while some teachers provide up-to-date grades regularly, others wait until mid-year to post grades. In a Spanish III academic course, students were given a corrective symbol sheet to utilize as a guide for final corrections. Students made their own corrections after receiving teacher feedback. In the English IV Academic course, comments were readily seen throughout the paper and specific components were to be addressed based on the criteria for the assignment. During the school day, subject-specific labs are available for students during flex and teachers make themselves available to offer feedback and support on the learning process. According to the Endicott survey, 76.5 percent of students agree that teachers offer suggestions to help improve their work. Students frequently email teachers for feedback before and after an assessment. Parents report that teachers inform them of student achievement through PowerSchool, emails, and personal interactions. Students report that teachers use Eboard, Weebly, Cloud Service, Google Drive, Google Classroom, and email to communicate feedback and often times it is difficult for them to locate teacher feedback in so many different arenas. As a result, the ample feedback given to the students in a timely manner allows the opportunity to improve their work and strengthen their understanding of their performance.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student work
- teacher interview
- students
- parents

Standard 4 Indicator 9

Conclusions

Many teachers utilize formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning. In the Computerized Music Course, students create a song composition utilizing Reason software to check for understanding of the tool. Students in the 2D Art Foundations course submit formative assessments before the culminating product and have a teacher conference to check for understanding. Students in the photography class complete an online quiz to make sure they understand the basic camera functions. In the psychology course, students complete a quiz to monitor understanding of key terms. For English courses, teachers often collect rough drafts and comment on student work before students submit their final copy of the essay. Within the learning center, teachers offer assistance and support for the formative steps to a summative assessment. In geometry, students often complete an exit slip that is non-graded that informs instructional practices for the following period. For biology, students are encouraged to participate in an exploratory phase where they ask questions based on a neutral statement. These questions inform the next level of analysis for the course. Chemistry students determine properties of substances, formulate questions to help make connections, and make predictions based on acquired understanding. Throughout this process, the teacher observes students and checks for understanding before they submit their final product. In Exercise Science, students learn a physical skill, apply it daily, and chart their results. Teachers report that the use of daily formative assessments has been emphasized in the past year. Many teachers monitor student performance with verbal checks for understanding. During classroom visits, a majority of the classes had a variety of ways to check for understanding (i.e., homework review, class discussions, worksheets, group work). Many teachers report using formative assessments to develop a plan for instruction before the final summative assessment. Some teachers who teach similar courses utilize common planning time to shape common assessments and review results in order to adjust instructional practices. As a result, constant formative assessments across many departments enforce understanding of instructional practice and improve student learning.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student work
- teacher interview
- Endicott survey

Standard 4 Indicator 10

Conclusions

Teachers and administrators inconsistently examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice. Teachers often use common planning time to create instructional plans, but are not formally involved in a data analysis protocol for student work. Teachers do examine course-level assessments to determine placement, but have not initiated a formal process for the examination of student work. Student work is examined collaboratively by departments for the purpose of improving instructional practice. Teachers mentioned that they work within small groups in their departments, but infrequently use their time for revising curriculum. During CPT, each department with two sections of the same course shares materials and creates unified assessments. In the Global Studies courses, teachers administer the same major assessments and revise these assessments within the year or for the following year. There is little evidence that specific planning has been done to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. Administration has mentioned the importance of and emphasis on 21st century learning expectations, but this emphasis is not yet being mirrored in all disciplines. Individual and collaborative review of standardized assessments is still an ongoing process. Assessment data is collected from the PSAT and SAT, but not every student takes the exam and not every department uses the data for revising curriculum and improving instructional practice. School counseling staff keeps data from sending schools and receiving schools which is logged, using a transcript review sheet. Each sheet is filed and kept as a source of reference for the teachers and administration. The school counseling staff also receives information from post-secondary institutions through Naviance and SurveyMonkey; college-bound students have access to this information, which tells them acceptance rates of LHS graduates at specific colleges and universities, and how the graduates perform. On the survey, students were asked about the ways the school district prepared them for their post-high school plans. According to administration, there is a low return rate of student survey feedback from the alumni at the collegiate level. Gathering student feedback from alumni is an ongoing process. When teachers develop a more formalized plan to examine a range of evidence of student learning, they will develop a more informed process to improve instruction and curriculum revision.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- school leadership
- school support staff

Standard 4 Indicator 11

Conclusions

Grading and reporting practices are in the process of being reviewed, but have yet to be revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. Students and teachers have stated that grading policies vary by course and teacher. The math department started conversations about the weighting of formative and summative assessments. The English department started discussions about the weighting of essays within each course. Reporting practices for grading are outlined in the student handbook (eight times a school year, at the mid-point and end of each marking period). According to the handbook, the expectation is that grades are "reasonably consistent," "objective," and "clearly communicated to students and parents." Teachers have been involved in an ongoing review, discussion, and examination of grading and reporting process in order to create uniformity. Some teachers reported that the weighting of formative, summative, and behavioral grades still needs to be developed, agreed upon, and formalized as a school. In addition, a few teachers apply the "50 percent rule," which is having no-zeros for grades and the lowest score possible is a 50 percent. The theory behind this practice is that students will be able to improve their grade despite a few poor performance outcomes. The principal and two English teachers attended a workshop on assessments and grading policies and were introduced to the 50 percent rule (i.e., "The Case Against the Zero"). Retake policies are offered by some teachers, and late penalties vary from teacher to teacher. Since grading policies are determined by the individual teachers, there is limited consistency across and within departments. Students report variations in late policies that while one teacher accepts no late work, another teacher will take points off, and another teacher will not take any points off for lateness. Students also report that math teachers have been willing to allow retakes, but not all teachers allow second chances at meeting performance standards on an individual assessments. English teachers report starting a discussion about the percentage weight of essays and tentatively decided that essays should be approximately 30 percent of the student's overall grade. Math teachers have engaged in an ongoing discussion about grading options and have informally communicated through email about the grading break down in terms of tests, quizzes, homework, and other assessments. In addition, math teachers have been working a zero to four grading scale for reasoning and calculation criteria. Administration monitors student grades through PowerSchool, but the frequency of teacher postings varies from teacher to teacher. Students and parents expressed that a few teachers wait too long to post grades. For example, some teachers post right before the mid-year juncture, and by that point, it may be difficult for students to improve their academic performance. When grading practices are reviewed and revised, a consistent improvement of student achievement and a greater understanding of students' development of the 21st century learning expectations will be evident.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- students

Standard 4 Commendations

Commendation

The practice of providing rubrics to students prior to summative assessments

Commendation

The clear communication of 21st century learning expectations to all students

Commendation

The diverse range formative and summative assessment tools offered to measure student learning

Commendation

The regular, ongoing discussion of grading and assessment policies

Commendation

The dedication to implement formative assessment to monitor, measure, and improve student learning

Commendation

The willingness of teachers to engage in professional conversations about assessment

Commendation

The timely and immediate feedback offered to students

Commendation

The department and teacher collaborations to discuss student work and course-level assessments

Commendation

The dedication to discuss and examine grading practices and policies

Commendation

The dedication to discuss and examine grading practices and policies

Standard 4 Recommendations

Recommendation

Develop and implement a formal process to assess student progress in meeting the 21st century learning expectations based on school-wide rubrics

Recommendation

Consistently communicate progress toward achievement of 21st century learning expectations for each student to students, parents, and community members

Recommendation

Ensure consistency of timely and regular feedback to students regarding their course grades among teachers in the building

Recommendation

Formalize the collection and use of assessment data to respond to inequities in student achievement

Recommendation

Make explicit connections between course content and the school's 21st century learning expectations

Recommendation

Consistently collaborate to create and revise common assessments to measure learning expectations

Recommendation

Review, revise, and formalize all grading practices to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs

Standard 5 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The school community consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all. There is ample evidence of a safe, positive, and respectful culture at Litchfield High School. There is a plethora of student work displayed throughout each hallway of the building. Administrators, teachers, and students all take pride in showcasing student products that show culminations of higher order thinking skills, inquiry-based learning and group collaboration. These high expectations are mirrored throughout the student, parent and teacher handbooks and communicate the goals for all students. Parents and students are both required to sign an acknowledgment of review to ensure that they have read and understood all of these policies and protocols of the school. Classroom observations indicate that higher order thinking is taking place regularly in courses and students are frequently challenged to think creatively about material. Emergency protocols are in place for evacuations, assemblies, securing the building, medical emergencies/health issues, and emergency response teams. These formalized procedures are in place and are clearly outlined so teachers, staff, and students are able to remain safe if any emergency were to arise. The Endicott survey also indicates that 81 percent of students feel safe at school. In addition to physical safety, the Safe School Climate Plan has been driven from National School Climate Standards. There are numerous clubs and activities that meet regularly which include Acts of Kindness (AOK), Art Club, Envirothon, Interact, Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), National Honor Society (NHS), National Foreign Language Honor Society (NFLHS), Student Council, Peer Mediators, and Technology Students Association (TSA). There are many events that drive much of the school pride and school spirit at Litchfield. Students report that the sporting events and music/choir events often have large audiences of students and school personnel cheering and supporting each other. Students have taken initiative and demonstrated leadership with the programs Project Purple to prevent drug use and a signed pledge to Rachel's Challenge to prevent bullying for a safer school climate for all students. The school nurse has developed a fundraiser for various charities by which anyone in the school can donate money to the fundraiser and "flock" another teacher or student's locker, car, or classroom. "Flocking" involves decorating with pink streamers, balloons, and flamingos and at any time a person may realize he or she has been chosen. This has been recognized by staff and students as a positive contribution to the school, and another way that people here feel a strong sense of community and belonging. Classroom observation also indicated frequent praise of students and positive affirmations about their work or participation. The Endicott survey reports that 65 percent of students believe the school culture supports independent student learning, and 64 percent of students believe the school culture is safe, positive, and supportive. Interviews with students and classroom observations demonstrate the strong relationships that teachers have with their students. When interviewed, students described the school as "close-knit" and characterized it as a family. Students also reported that it is hard for them to fail at this school because of how often the teachers extend themselves with supports. Students were eager to discuss how much the teachers care about their success and will wear many hats to ensure students needs are met. Students have indicated that the level of expectation is high at Litchfield, and that they are challenged in various ways. The core values and 21st century learning expectations are often embedded in assignments, course content, and assessments. In the Endicott survey, 95 percent of parents reported that they believe the school encourages students to take responsibility for their learning. Similarly, 86 percent of students believe teachers support students in assuming responsibility for their learning. Through courses, Student Success Plans and advisory activities, there are many opportunities for students to demonstrate skills with goal-setting, self-regulating appropriate behavior, respect for others, and participation in the school and community. Due to the safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture at Litchfield, students and staff are able to successfully adopt the core values and learning expectations put forth by administration and staff.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- students
- parents
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

Standard 5 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The school is collectively equitable and inclusive, ensuring access to challenging academic experiences for all students, making certain that courses throughout the curriculum are populated with students reflecting the diversity of the student body, fostering heterogeneity, and supporting the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Students in the middle school attend unlevleed, heterogeneously grouped classes for all course subjects with the exception of mathematics. At the high school, students are able to enroll in heterogeneously grouped classes, either core or elective. All students, regardless of grouping patterns, have the same school-wide goals and will achieve 21st century learning expectations. For example, world language classes are not grouped by ability for the first year. All seniors are required to take Civics which is heterogeneous, although some may opt to take AP U.S. Government and Politics. Other electives that are grouped heterogeneously include Psychology, Anatomy and Physiology, Forensics, Creative Writing and Journalism. The varied class levels are indicated in the program of studies to ensure understanding amongst students and their families. Because the schedule allows for up to eight courses in a semester, there are ample opportunities for heterogeneous classes for all students. Further, there is an override process to allow students to request a level change in a class. Through this process, students are able to provide specific examples and evidence to support why a higher level placement may be more appropriate. Then, an action plan is created with the teacher, parent, student, and/or school counseling department to ensure student success. The action plan encourages and supports students to challenge themselves beyond their comfort level to maximize their potential. Similarly, if a student is recommended for an AP or honors level class, they are able to choose a lower level class if they feel it is more appropriate. The administrative team believes this process helps to minimize achievement gaps. Administrators recounted success stories of students in special education that went through the override process and demonstrated success in higher level courses. All special education students at Litchfield are mainstreamed in their classes, including core subject areas. Students with IEPs have equal access to the same curriculum and receive guided assistance in achieving the school-wide expectations. The Endicott survey indicates that 87 percent of students and 88 percent of staff agree that there are a number of opportunities to take courses in which students of varying levels of ability are enrolled. The equitable and inclusive academic environment for all students fosters heterogeneity and provides a challenging learning experience school-wide.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- parents
- central office personnel
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 3

Conclusions

There is a formal, ongoing program through which students in grades 7-11 have an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. Although students in grade 12 do not participate in a formal advisory program, they do have the option of completing a capstone experience and in the future, the capstone experience will be required for all seniors. Approximately 30 percent of students in grade 12 have chosen this option for which they earn 1.0 honors credit upon successful completion of the capstone project. Litchfield adopted an advisory program in 2011 after staff observed another high school's implementation. In the high school, groups of 8-13 students meet with their advisor for 32 minutes during flex time on Fridays. Middle school students meet with their advisor for 45 minutes on Mondays. The two goals of the advisory program are to personalize students' interactions with the Litchfield High School community and to implement a curriculum that teaches students how to be self-directed learners. This program helps to foster both intellectual growth and personal growth. This program incorporates small group discussions, activities, self-advocacy, and goal setting. There are also four units covered throughout the year: academic, personal/social, career/financial exploration, and community-based service learning project/transition activities. These units are geared to be developmentally appropriate for each respective grade. This program encompasses Connecticut High School Reform Initiatives and also incorporates guidelines for state-mandated Student Success Plans. The program and curriculum continue to evolve year to year. While another goal of advisory is to ensure that students have an adult in the building with whom they can connect (in addition to their guidance counselor), students have reported varying levels of comfort with their advisors. It appears some students have made stronger connections with their advisors than others have, depending on commonalities, academic experiences and length of time spent with their advisors. After consultation with school counselors, advisors may choose to initiate communication with parents regarding academic and/or personal issues. Aside from the formal advisory time to meet with their advisors, students also have plenty of opportunities to meet with adults they feel comfortable approaching, whether it is the advisor or another adult. Flex time provides 32-minute opportunities Monday through Thursday for students to meet with teachers or staff. Further, teachers are available after school hours to meet with students. There are many times during the week that a student has an opportunity to meet with a teacher or staff member to discuss either academic work or other issues that may arise. Through the implementation of advisory, students have the opportunity to develop connections with an adult other than their school counselor to help achieve 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teachers
- students

Standard 5 Indicator 4

Conclusions

In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff engage informally in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning. There are regular opportunities for teachers to engage in professional discourse regarding teaching and learning, but opportunities for out-of-district professional development are more limited. The high school has common planning time (CPT) for 30 minutes twice a week. During this time, the goal is for teachers to collaborate and discuss curriculum, learning expectations, grading standards, and instructional practice. In reality, this occurs inconsistently since most of the focus during CPT is on administrative directives and initiatives, housekeeping and budgetary tasks. Once a month, there are longer 90-minute blocks which allow for departments (grades 7-12) to generate vertical curriculum coordination. Further, this is an opportunity for teachers to reflect on inquiry and analysis in their courses. Formal data teams do not operate at the high school, although assessment data is collected and discussed informally. However, at the middle school there are weekly team meetings to discuss data-driven achievement benchmarks. These results are generated from Connecticut Benchmark Assessment (CBAS), Easy Curriculum-Based Measure (CBM), Tools for Real-Time Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (TRAILS), and SRBI tiered interventions. Teacher interviews suggested that there seems to be limited formal time for cross-curricular planning and calibration of rubrics and assessments. Administrators and the board of education encourage and promote teacher-led professional development. Examples of this include technology workshops, flipped classroom, and paperless environment workshops. Teachers have begun using individualized websites, Edmodo and Twitter so classroom information is more accessible. Current research and best practice models are discussed in faculty meetings which occur monthly for 45 minutes. For example, the staff is currently learning about Richard Elmore's "Model of the Instructional Core" and how to implement the theory into the classroom. In 2012, the professional district held a staff-wide book read of *Make Just One Change*. This was targeted to improve higher order thinking in the classroom as well as inquiry-based learning. Prior to developing the advisory program at Litchfield High School, the staff observed Shepaug Valley Regional High School/Middle School. This helped the staff to gain a better understanding of what the program looks like in a similar district. Finally, Litchfield always begins the year with three professional development days which is a time for staff to collaborate and strengthen instruction for student learning and inquiry. While professional development is certainly embedded in the school year, the formal options outside the school are limited. Outside professional development must be paid for by those who choose to attend, rather than funded through the budget. Consequently, there have been minimal out-of-district professional development opportunities for teachers to help inform their understanding of curriculum, instruction, and technology among other domains. In the self-study, Litchfield indicated that one of its needs was to increase funding for opportunities for off-site professional development. Members of the board of education also agreed that this was an area of need. When presented with multiple and varied professional development opportunities, both in- and out-of-district, teachers maintain currency with best practice and apply skills and ideas gained to improve classroom instruction, curriculum, and assessment.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- school board

Standard 5 Indicator 5

Conclusions

School leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning. The self-study indicates that Litchfield administrators participated in a five-day training learning about the evaluation system. Additionally, the administrators spent 40 hours learning Teach Scape to develop a research-based evaluation process for teachers. There has been extensive collaboration regarding the implementation of evaluation methods. The Litchfield Educator Evaluation and Development Plan (LEED) was created by both educators and administrators, and was implemented in the summer of 2013. The LEED evaluation system has been utilized school-wide and evaluations are determined based on the following criteria: indicators of student academic growth and development (45 percent), observation of teacher performance and practice (40 percent), parent/peer feedback (10 percent), and whole-school student learning indicators/feedback (5 percent). As a result, the professional goals from teachers are informing instruction and curriculum design for student learning. The comprehensive evaluation system ensures student learning and instructional strategies that are data driven. There are also pre- and post-observations through the adoption of the Bloomboard program. Collectively, these observations help to ensure that the Common Core State Standards are in place and can be related directly to the respective CCT domains. There are also mid-year conferences to allow for frequent and consistent monitoring of teacher instruction and teacher goals. Teachers expressed concerns regarding the calibration of evaluations among the two administrators in the building, which are currently being considered. The consistent implementation of school-wide, research-based evaluation processes drive a focus on improved student learning.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- central office personnel
- Endicott survey

Standard 5 Indicator 6

Conclusions

The organization of time allows for pervasive supports of research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students. The middle school schedule has seven periods a day that run approximately 55 minutes. The middle school team has established common planning time (CPT) for 45 minutes each day to review instruction and progress. This collaboration helps teachers to organize their time and to increase their flexibility in the classroom. The high school runs on an A/B block schedule in which each of the four classes meet for 80 minutes on alternating days. The block scheduling allows for significant time and flexibility for both teachers and students. Teachers and students both indicate that the 80-minute classes allow for a depth in student learning, student engagement, inquiry-based learning, and collaborative group work to enable guided discovery. Further, there is a 32-minute flex period that runs opposite of lunch every day. This is an additional block of time for students to meet with teachers to finish outstanding assignments, get extra help, or participate in clubs and activities. The academic resource center (ARC) is another required block for identified students which provides a guided study hall. Students in ARC have the opportunity to work on assignments and to build their skills in areas of need. The schedule also allows for 30 minutes after school for additional supports as necessary. The block schedule that is in place allows for flexible adjustment for assemblies or special programs that may take place within this small community. The high school teams also meet regularly for common planning time to discuss student work, grading policies, curriculum and instruction. CPT runs for 30 minutes with department meetings once a month for 90 minutes. There are schedules or agendas created in advance to guide conversations during these meetings. This time is considered valuable by teachers and allows for increased collaboration and calibration among the department to help inform student instruction. Teachers have indicated that when given cross-curricular opportunities, they are able to build more strongly off one another to guide instructional practice and to build instruction. The organization of time at Litchfield allows for the vast majority of teachers to engage in research-based instruction and professional collaboration and to reach the learning needs of all students.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- students

Standard 5 Indicator 7

Conclusions

Student load and class size often enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students. In the high school, classes rarely exceed 25 students, and 74 percent of the classes have fewer than 20 students. The average size of classes at the middle school is approximately 25 students, although some classes approach 30 students. Currently, classroom observations indicate that student needs are being met through successful classroom management, however class size at the middle school is significantly larger than that of the high school. Personalization of instruction at the middle school is limited due to the increased class size. At the high school the average student load for teachers is 60 students whereas at the middle school the average load is 90 students. The Endicott survey reports 83 percent of students believe their class size is reasonable, and 82 percent of staff believes their class sizes enable them to meet the learning needs of individual students. Interviews with students suggested that they feel their learning needs are met with the small class sizes. Observations of classrooms indicated that the small class sizes allow teachers to spend ample time working with students individually. They are able to personalize learning and frequently assess and adjust the pacing of the class accordingly. Students believe that their teachers are able to adjust their instruction to the student needs and reach each student as a result. Further, if students need more time to work on something more specific, they have a flex block built into their schedule to allow for these additional supports. Discussions with the board of education suggested that in spite of declining enrollment, there is a commitment to keep class sizes small and not to reduce teaching positions. As a result of small student load and class size, teachers are able to successfully meet the learning needs of individual students.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- panel presentation
- teachers
- school board
- Endicott survey

Standard 5 Indicator 8

Conclusions

The principal, working with other building leaders, provides deliberate instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The principal at Litchfield models and lives the vision that she has put into place for staff and students. The school's mission is to graduate college and/or career ready life-long learners within a safe, tolerant and respectful environment. In collaboration with parents, educators, and the community, Litchfield High School students prepares students to actively participate in a global community and will develop as motivated, self-reliant, and ethical individuals. The principal and faculty created this mission and core values, which guide instructional practices. This design was aimed to deliberately align with the Common Core standards. Moreover, the principal has begun to implement the Instructional Core model proposed by Richard Elmore. She reinforces this philosophy that if you alter something with either teachers, students, or content, the other two areas will be influenced and will require examination. Teachers are encouraged to discuss how their instructional practices relate back to this larger vision, and the vision then continues to inform future instruction moving forward. The principal meets with curriculum coordinators twice a month for extended meetings. This is a time to further discuss how to improve instructional efficiency, improve supports for students and ways to encourage inquiry-based problem solving skills. Teachers and administration have both reported that significant time goes into teacher evaluations, observations, and department and curriculum planning. It is clear that the principal is involved in helping to influence instruction and develop integration of Litchfield's core values, beliefs and learning expectations. More specifically, as there have been shifts in student interest, the principal has supported the creation of new courses. This has given the departments autonomy and independence with regard to creating new classes that can be developed for the following year. The Endicott Survey indicated that 70% of students believe the principal is clear about what she wants the school to accomplish for all students. There was also an event for teachers in April of 2012 that discussed revision of the mission statement and core values. This speaks to collaborative instructional leadership guided by the principal. It is also important to note that the graduation rate at Litchfield High School is 98.9% and has been ranked second highest in the state. The principal discussed the amount of work that school counselors, teachers and administration put forth to ensure that a student has a plan in place to graduate successfully. This supports the mission statement that the school is enabling all students to graduate college and/or career ready. Through these various examples, it is clear that the principal successfully infuses and integrates the school's core values, beliefs and learning expectations through teacher curriculum and instruction, and therefore to all students at Litchfield by graduation.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- central office personnel
- Endicott survey

Standard 5 Indicator 9

Conclusions

Teachers, students, and parents are often involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership. The Student Teacher Parent Council (STPC) is an organization that accesses all three stakeholders to put forth input and exercise decision-making. Some of the outcomes have been concession stands, fundraising, award banquets, field trips, and the senior class trip. Parent interviews indicated that this organization is an important venue for input across stakeholders. Moreover, parents believe that their input is valued and appreciated. Similarly, the monthly board of education meetings are another time for parents to express concerns, questions, or input regarding Litchfield High School. The principal and assistant principal extend themselves to feedback from students, parents, and teachers. Parents can schedule meetings with the principal and can request her presence at team meetings if needed. Further, several surveys, questionnaires, and interviews indicate that administration values the opinions of stakeholders. Every fall, parents are given an anonymous survey to fill out with a range of questions targeting how Litchfield High School's communication operates. This survey investigates the quality of school communication by contact through email, cell phone, and the school's website. The results of this survey are now being used by teachers and administrators to enhance communication to help promote a safe climate and culture at the school. Students also are given the "Litchfield Youth Survey" to help address any concerns within the student community. The board of education approved this survey and all students participate unless parents opted out for their children. Currently, these results are being analyzed by administration. The students of Litchfield High School also started the Project Purple initiative. This has been created as a mechanism for students to make healthy decisions regarding the prevention of drug use. Students have been educated on drug use and have taken ownership over the group to prevent their peers from using substances. This is a group that Litchfield students take pride in while demonstrating their decision-making ability to make educated and informed choices to avoid illegal substances. The school counseling department has encouraged the use of Family Connection/Naviance Succeed for parents and students to access for course selection. This allows for families to be more involved in the course selection/college/career process as their students move through high school. Aside from communication from the school counselors, there is also "Constant Contact" used to relay information to parents. This program allows for messages to be sent via cell phone, email, and the school's website. PowerSchool is another venue to encourage frequent communication of student grades and assignments to parents. Additionally, Open House is held early in the school year to allow for parents to meet and engage with their students' teachers. This is a time to learn more about class expectations and course study. All of these communication opportunities allow students and parents to maintain regular contact and communication with the school. Teachers are mainly in support of school-wide decisions. There are many instances of fundamental policies and procedures in place that are uniform across staff; there are also certain changes that have been made to which teachers are currently adapting. For example, when advisory was implemented, teachers participated and adopted the program and curriculum. When the technology initiative of 1:1 devices was implemented, teachers were able to adapt accordingly. Teachers, students, and parents are frequently and actively engaged in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 5 Indicator 10

Conclusions

Teachers frequently exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. According to Litchfield's self-study, teachers demonstrate leadership through direct involvement with planning and organizing clubs, facilitating activities, and coaching. Teachers also serve on the TEAM coordination, advisory, LEED committees and the Crisis Group. Many teachers serve in multiple roles. In addition, teachers are actively involved in summer curriculum writing and revision. For example, the world languages curriculum coordinator (a Latin teacher) secured funds for the summer revision of the grades 4-8 Spanish curriculum, but deferred leadership for the task to the Spanish teacher. That curriculum revision led to the revision of the grades 9-12 Spanish curriculum in order to vertically align instructional practices and assessment. A team approach was utilized throughout the process during which department members relied on the strengths of various members to accomplish the task. In terms of formal leadership roles for teachers, the organizational structure includes curriculum coordinators for each of the main core content areas as well as the special disciplines. Most curriculum coordinators focus on grades 7-12; however, both the music/arts coordinator and the world languages coordinator have responsibilities that include grades 4-6 as well. All curriculum coordinators receive a stipend for their efforts and do not have a duty, but they do not have release time in which to visit classrooms. Coordinators meet twice a month with administration and then use administration initiatives to drive the planning for curriculum development and revision, CPT, and monthly department meetings. Coordinators are also responsible for department budgets, review of student schedules, planning teacher schedules and annual updates to the board of education curriculum committee. Curriculum initiatives (i.e., redesign, new courses) have been initiated by both the coordinators and teachers. Other initiatives such as Rachel's Challenge, 9th grade meetings and Project Purple have been teacher driven and have helped to improve the overall climate of the school. Funding for memberships in professional organizations is limited to those which directly impact students such as CMEA which requires membership in order for students to participate in All-State and Festival music ensembles. The library maintains a professional reading area to provide staff with current resources in educational research and best practice. Because teachers are initiating new ideas and taking on leadership roles to promote implementation, student engagement in learning is positively impacted.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- department leaders

Standard 5 Indicator 11

Conclusions

The school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. Although the superintendent is a new arrival to the district, there is evidence that she and the building principal are building a strong relationship that is accessible, collaborative, and supportive. The unanimous 9-0 hiring vote is evidence of the board of education's confidence in the new superintendent. The principal and the superintendent have already collaborated on the budget and other building issues as they have arisen. The superintendent has a vision for the district which is shared by the principal. The superintendent's policy is to provide the board of education with specific pertinent information to promote informed decisions, changing a previous culture to a more open dialogue with frequent and regular communications. The superintendent has initiated weekly communications with the board of education in order to provide updates and timely information on current issues. The principal meets twice a month with the board of education at regular meetings and also at the policy meetings. The board of education views its role as a policy maker, with both the superintendent and the principal charged with implementing the policies. The board of education is a tireless advocate for the school system, ensuring that funding needs are met to the best of its ability. The board has protected the small class sizes at the high school in spite of declining enrollment at the school and prioritizes a personalized experience for each high school student. The board of education is aware of the need for increased staff professional development even though this area has been severely cut in recent years. A positive, collaborative, and constructive relationship between and among the school board, superintendent, and the principal facilitates the achievement of the school's 21st learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- school board
- central office personnel
- school leadership

Standard 5 Indicator 12

Conclusions

The school board and superintendent generally provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school. The principal is given autonomy to make decisions regarding teaching and learning and some budget decisions that impact the school. Her input is sought in a variety of areas. The principal has been allowed to revise the curriculum and to add new classes to the program of studies even with declining school-wide enrollment. She regularly meets with curriculum coordinators to collect and disseminate information relative to initiatives, budget requests, and curriculum alignment, development and implementation. She was an integral part of the discussion related to the elimination of French from the world languages curriculum. The principal's suggestion for the scheduling of common planning time at the end of the day was supported by the school board and the superintendent. The principal was instrumental in decisions related to the purchase of new technology equipment, particularly the one-to-one program, although her input on the roll out of the program was limited. Through the addition of the academic resource center (ARC), the principal secured increased funding to enable all students to achieve the school's learning expectations. When questioned, teachers and parents feel that in most cases the principal had sufficient authority to make important decisions for the school and provides enough guidance for the staff to deliver the curriculum. Teachers and parents did state that certain decisions from the school board seem to usurp the principal's authority such as hiring decisions being overturned when recommended candidates were not approved, involvement by the board in student disciplinary decisions, and a new dress code policy established by the board. Occasionally, communications from the board of education did not follow the chain of command and went directly to the principal without first informing the superintendent. With the previous administration, budget information was requested from the principal and cuts were made at the superintendent level prior to submission to the board of education. The principal utilizes input from her staff and other instructional leaders to make important decisions that are in the best interests of the school community in terms of achieving its core values and 21st learning expectations. When the principal has sufficient authority over decisions within her role and responsibility, teacher and parent confidence in her leadership will be strengthened.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 5 Commendations

Commendation

The respectful and supportive school culture as evidenced by clubs, events, activities, and opportunities for students to feel personally and academically successful

Commendation

The number of heterogeneously grouped classes that foster equity, inclusion, and high expectations for all students

Commendation

The formal, ongoing program for students in grades 7 - 11 that ensures each student has an adult, in addition to their school counselor, who knows them well and assists in achieving the learning expectations

Commendation

The school schedule that allows teachers time during the school day to collaborate with their colleagues to ensure all student needs are met

Commendation

The implementation of research-based evaluation and supervision processes to improve student learning

Commendation

The manageable class size and student load for the majority of teachers, which allows them to meet the learning needs of individual students

Commendation

The parental, student, and teacher involvement in decision making processes which is valued by administrators

Commendation

The involvement of teachers in multiple and varied leadership roles

Commendation

The board of education's commitment to maintain programs and services in spite of declining student enrollment

Commendation

The principal's efforts in providing effective and purposeful leadership for the school community

Standard 5 Recommendations

Recommendation

Provide an opportunity for students in grade 12 to participate in a formal, ongoing program which ensures that they have a connection with an adult in the building, in addition to their school counselor, who knows them well and assists them in achieving 21st century learning expectations

Recommendation

Provide some funding for out-of-district professional development opportunities for teachers and staff to fully maximize student learning and achievement

Recommendation

Ensure teacher evaluation calibration and consistency among both building administrators

Recommendation

Provide the building principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school

Standard 6 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The school has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, that support each student's achievement of the 21st century learning expectations. All support services staff are involved in identification and intervention planning for students. A formal Student Intervention Team (SIT) includes the school nurse, school counselors, school social worker and school psychologist as well as administrators. School counselors receive information about students of concern from teachers and/or by reviewing progress reports or checking grades in PowerSchool. The SIT team meets weekly to discuss concerns and develop intervention plans. A SRBI interventionist was a referral source for this team, however, that position is currently vacant. An identified student can receive assistance through the academic resource center as well as with counseling support. In addition to SIT, the grades 7-9 school counselor and school social worker attend weekly middle school team meetings where student concerns may be raised and interventions discussed. The school counselor can refer middle school students with interpersonal issues for peer mediation. Training for students who act as peer mediators is provided by the school social worker. For students who do not adequately respond to interventions, referrals may be made to begin the PPT or 504 meeting process. School counselors are the case managers for students who require 504 accommodation plans. Special education teachers are case managers for students with IEPs. Students identified for special education have access to co-taught classes, appropriate modifications to curriculum, resource support, and/or the help of an instructional assistant. Currently, there is not a transition coordinator to support identified students' preparation for career and post-secondary education. The Litchfield district has limited diversity, however, students identified as English language learners are assessed annually and services to support their learning are determined. All students have access to academic help labs and National Honor Society peer tutors. Subject area teachers ensure that students know they can access the help labs and give reminders during class for students to seek out this level of assistance if they are having difficulty with concepts. In addition, teachers provide extra help to students through the flex period and after school. There is no formal alternative education program, however, administrators report that individualized interventions, such as a reduced course load and counseling support are implemented to help those students struggling to meet graduation requirements. For those who do not respond to interventions and choose to withdraw from school, Education Connections, the regional education support center, provides credit recovery options. The school nurse monitors student attendance and makes phone calls home for any student who is absent and does not have parent verification. This helps the support services staff to identify students with chronic absenteeism and to determine whether the issue is related to an illness or emotional-behavioral concern. If a need is identified, the student may be referred to SIT. The team then determines intervention strategies which may include options such as creation of a health plan, counseling services, and academic support. Through the advisory program, students engage in lessons and activities that help them develop their Student Success Plans. The developmental school counseling curriculum further provides opportunities for students to work toward meeting some of the 21st century expectations. Administrators are exploring ways to utilize the Student Success Plan as an electronic portfolio that will be a record of student progress at meeting all of these expectations. When 21st century learning expectations are incorporated into Student Success Plans, the student support services staff will be able to more readily identify those in need of support to meet those expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- parents
- school leadership
- school support staff

- Endicott survey

Standard 6 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Litchfield High School frequently provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services. According to the Endicott survey, 63 percent of parents agree that the school provides information to families about support services, and 77 percent of students know who to ask for help if they have a personal problem. During student interviews, it was clear that the students know where to go to receive support. The school holds several informational meetings for families during the year. Meet the Teacher Night is held each spring for families of incoming grade 7 students as part of a transition support program. Open House is held each fall for parents of students in grades 7-12, allowing parents to follow their children's daily schedules, meet teachers, and become informed of supports offered to all students. Parent meetings are often scheduled during middle school team time. These meetings can be initiated by parents or teachers, and provide the opportunity for discussion of student progress and academic and/or behavioral concerns. At the high school level, teachers and counselors are available to meet with parents after school. Grades are updated frequently and are reviewed by school faculty at the mid-point and end of each quarter. Teachers are mandated to call parents of students with grades in the D or F range at this time. School counselors and classroom teachers meet with students with Ds or Fs to develop improvement plans. Through the use of PowerSchool, parents, students, and teachers have access to students' grades at all times. The guidance department has a website which is updated regularly to reflect current services offered by the department, including college fairs and visits, planning sessions, course selection, volunteer and job opportunities, testing information, and a variety of other services. Evening programs, including college financial aid workshops and college fairs are held for students and families. The school social worker receives information from the business office regarding families in need and reaches out to these families at various times during the year, providing assistance with holiday meals, holiday gifts, and fee waivers for school activities such as field trips and fees for school-issued technology devices. Parents and guardians of special education students receive a summer mailing that covers all available services and supports. The variety of formats with which the school communicates available resources to families creates a strong relationship between families and the school which supports the students acquisition of 21st century skills.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- central office personnel
- Endicott survey

Standard 6 Indicator 3

Conclusions

All support services staff use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student. The school counseling department uses a variety of technology to support its programs and initiatives. These include websites such as ACT, FAFSA, College Majors 101, NCAA, and Khan Academy. College Board, CommonApp, and CSCA/ASCA provide access to counselor resources. The school supplements offerings in the program of studies with online education by providers such as Brigham Young University, Florida Virtual High School, K12, and Keystone Online High School. Students use Naviance and Career Cruising for college and career planning. Through the advisory program, Student Success Plans are developed and maintained with the use of these resources. In an effort to provide parents with information in an efficient manner, a school counseling website, webinars, and podcasts address items of interest such as financial aid, scheduling options, and online resources. PowerSchool is available to faculty, parents, and students for monitoring student grades and attendance. School counselors regularly use PowerSchool to run D/F grade reports to make timely interventions with students in danger of failing courses, to assist students with course selections, and to monitor attendance. The special education staff uses IEP Direct to maintain students' Individual Education Plans. This provides organized access to student goals and objectives as well as provides information about needed accommodations/modifications. Special education teachers maintain websites that not only provide calendar and schedule information, but also a variety of resources for students and parents. These include websites that support student learning and provide informational sources about special education services and legal considerations. Through the use of SNAP, the school nurse charts student visits to the nurse's office, immunization records, and medications. It is also used to record mandated health screenings. The information stored through SNAP can be accessed to complete mandated state reports. Student information is saved annually so the nurses within the district can view all students in grades K-12. The school nurse uses PowerSchool regularly to obtain demographic information and emergency contact information. She uses a section of PowerSchool to record dates of students' physical examinations for those students who participate in interscholastic sports. As a result of the use of technology by support services staff, coordinated services are delivered to each student.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- central office personnel
- school support staff

Standard 6 Indicator 4

Conclusions

The certified/licensed school counseling personnel and support staff at Litchfield Middle/High School provide an array of services and programs to meet all students' needs. Three certified/licensed school counselors service grades 7-12. One is dedicated to grades 7-9 and has a caseload of approximately 250 students. The other two have an alphabetically split portion of grades 10-12 with approximately 120 students assigned to each. All three caseloads fall within the 1:250 guideline recommended by the American School Counseling Association (ASCA). There is one school social worker for the district and she spends approximately 75 percent of her time at Litchfield High School. The district school psychologist is available 1.5 days per week. Specific role descriptions have been defined for each of these positions. One administrative assistant serves these five support services professionals. A full-time SRBI intervention specialist position was instituted in the prior school year, however, at present the position is vacant. Additionally, the school-to-career stipend position was eliminated, creating a gap in these services. Parents and students report satisfaction with school counseling services. Assistance with post-high school planning, course selection, and individual personal/academic issues were indicated as strengths of the department. Parents noted strong communication and a sense of caring. The Endicott survey results show that although only 16.5 percent of students feel they meet with their counselors regularly, 77.9 percent know who to ask for help at school if they have a problem; 56.7 percent of the students feel comfortable going to their school counselors. A developmental school counseling curriculum has been implemented in grades 7-12. Based on ASCA and CT State Standards, the program includes individual, small group, and classroom delivery methods. It addresses the three school counseling domains - academic, personal/social, and career. Goal setting, learning style, transition, career assessment, and college planning are some of the topics that are addressed. A supplemental curriculum for grades 7-11 is facilitated through the advisory program. School counselors developed lessons that advisory teachers implement in their weekly meetings. At present, the structure of the middle school advisory program has promoted more consistent delivery to students. The high school advisory curriculum is being modified and structures instituted to strengthen its impact on student learning. Through planned lessons, all school counselors meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, and career/college counseling. Individual meetings with all grades 10 and 11 students are scheduled in the winter and spring months. With a 98.9 percent graduation rate, the grades 10-12 counselors devote much of their time in the fall to assisting grade 12 students with post-high school plans. The grades 7-9 school counselor meets individually with all freshmen in the fall and with grades 7 and 8 students on an as-needed basis. She also meets individually with all 6th grade students during course selection. This is a component of preparing for the transition to middle school. The school social worker has developed a peer mediation program that the middle school students can access for support with interpersonal issues. In addition to working with all students on developmental curriculum objectives, school counselors provide responsive services based on academic and/or personal need. Students report that school counselors are easily accessible and are flexible about scheduling time to meet with them. The school social worker and school psychologist facilitate group counseling opportunities for students who need additional support such as for the loss of a parent or for building social skills. The school social worker does not have a designated caseload, but shares IEP-mandated counseling responsibilities with the school counselors. The school counselors, social worker, nurse, and psychologist all participate on the SIT team. Weekly meetings allow for collaboration among themselves and other school staff. If a student is identified as needing an outside referral, this team, both formally and informally, is able to assist students and their families in identifying resources. Local hospitals, mental health providers, substance abuse treatment programs, and vocational support agencies are among those with whom they have developed a referral network. School counselors survey all students, grades 6-12 to determine their needs and to adjust services and programs to ensure students are achieving 21st century expectations. Use of technology, such as the Naviance program, facilitates data collection. Survey data is also used to support the transition of 6th grade students into the building as well as to assess the transition needs of graduating seniors. Attempts to survey parents about programs and services have resulted in limited feedback. Because the certified/licensed school counseling personnel and support staff at Litchfield Middle/High School provide an array of services and programs, students' personal/social, academic, and career planning needs are met.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 6 Indicator 5

Conclusions

The school's health services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and limited support staff. The school nurse provides services to the entire school community, and has a positive relationship with faculty, staff, students, and parents. According to the Endicott survey, 88.5 percent of the LHS student body reports feeling comfortable going to the school nurse, and 91.1 percent of parents feel that the health services program is adequately staffed. As the exclusive provider, her duties include administering acute health care services to students and staff, performing school-wide health screenings, and serving as a liaison for school personnel, family, community, and medical providers. She also administers medications, prepares and implements health care plans for students who have chronic health issues, and acts as consultant for 504 accommodation plans that are the result of a medical disability such as a concussion. Administrative duties include developing, maintaining, and updating district policies, procedures, and regulations for health-related issues. The Litchfield Middle/High School nurse is solely responsible for completing the district's state-mandated reports. In addition, she monitors student attendance and makes follow-up calls as needed. This function was previously performed by clerical staff. Despite enrollment decreases, her responsibilities have increased as student health care needs have become more complex. Daily monitoring of attendance and the required phone calls to parents are an added demand to an already full schedule. The school nurse is on the Emergency Response and Student Intervention Teams. As an integral member of the support services staff, she is involved in making referrals for students who may have health care needs that require outside intervention. Some of the nurse's duties related to sports and physical fitness include working with the athletic coordinators, the trainer, and coaches to keep track of rosters, sports physicals, injuries, and playing restrictions. The nurse also holds CPR and first aid training for coaches and other school personnel. While the school nurse strives to provide comprehensive preventative and direct health care services to the LHS community, the addition of certain clerical duties has made this task more demanding.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- school support staff
- Endicott survey

Standard 6 Indicator 6

Conclusions

Library/media services are often integrated into curriculum and instructional practices and have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff. A full-time library assistant allows the library/media specialist to deliver instruction in classroom. Only 26.4 percent of students surveyed report using the library often during classes. Students report that since they have their own laptops it is no longer necessary to use the library for research. The library is used by students for peer collaboration and quiet study. The library/media specialist supports the implementation of curriculum and exposes staff to new computer programs and uses for technology through Friday tech time. The library/media specialist uses information from teacher surveys to drive the topics covered on Fridays. She sends information to the entire staff via email to educate them on current technological programs, such as Edmodo, and Glogster, for instruction and learning. The library/media specialist collaborates with the technology staff. There is no formal process for the library/media specialist to actively engage in the implementation of the school's curriculum. The library/media specialist collaborates with the school counseling department to provide drug awareness information to the student body. The library/media specialist meets with an advisory group at the high school. She is also the English department head. There is no library curriculum that is delivered to students. The library's print collection of 10,535 volumes and five online subscriptions are available to support the school's curriculum. The estimated number of purchased print volumes acquired in the past three years is 500. There are only two printed periodical subscriptions. The library's electronic and technological resources provide students and teachers with access to ten desktop and four laptop computers. The library is wireless, as is the rest of the school, and students are permitted to use their own personal devices to access information. In 2012-2013, the school board adopted a one-to-one initiative which provides all students with a laptop or tablet to use in school and at home for the duration of the school year. Students and faculty have regular access to library/media services before and during the school day. In addition the library is open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday after school. The library/media specialist is responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent and group learning. She has surveyed students and used the information to purchase materials, start a book club, and expand computer offerings. The library/media specialist has developed a maker space to address the interests of student most notably in the areas of crafts and computer gaming. The staff has also created regular book talks with middle school students, a read-return-review program (not currently being used), and a variety of thematic book displays which encourage independent reading and gauge student interest. The TRAILS Assessment, which identifies information and technology literacy, has been administered and the information shared with teachers. The library/media services are an increasingly valuable asset that supports 21st century skills.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- school support staff

Standard 6 Indicator 7

Conclusions

Support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners, have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff.

The school employs three full-time certified school counselors, one for grades seven through nine and two for grades nine through twelve. Each student is assigned to a counselor for educational, emotional, and career counseling. Currently, the student to counselor ratio is approximately 250 to 1 for grades seven through nine and 120 to 1 for grades ten through twelve. The counselors assist students in understanding the relationship between their present coursework and future career possibilities.

Four full-time special education teachers serve 34 special education students. An SRBI interventionist serves 18 students, however, at this time, the position is vacant. A full-time school nurse and six special education paraprofessionals provide added support. Special education teachers and paraprofessionals work closely with classroom teachers to integrate students with disabilities into the general education program. Paraprofessionals support students in general education classes as required by student IEPs. The special education teachers create student schedules in compliance with IEPs, create paraprofessional schedules to cover IEP hours, create IEP goals and objectives, enforce IEP goals and objectives in the learning centers, and are actively involved in co-teaching classes, and in creating and implementing life skills programs. The SRBI interventionist provides short-term, goal-oriented, supplemental instruction to students who are struggling academically, and student progress is closely monitored to inform decisions regarding potential modifications to intervention strategies. Teachers report that special education teachers meet with them frequently to ensure student success. According to the Endicott Survey, 85.2% of the staff believe that there is adequate staff for the identified students and that support services personnel collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services and other support staff. Special education students participate in general education classes. SIT meets weekly to review data and make decisions regarding interventions, including changes to existing plans, as well as new referrals. One full-time director of special services oversees the special education department district-wide. One part-time secretary to the director of special services is employed.

LHS employs one part-time speech and language pathologist. A school psychologist, who is accessible part-time at the high school, primarily works with the special education population, but is available for consultation and counseling, as needed, for all students. One full-time school social worker provides services for the entire high school population, as well as for other students in the district. The school contracts necessary occupational and physical therapy services with outside agencies.

Teachers, counselors, and targeted services and support personnel collaborate in a number of ways to ensure the achievement of 21st century learning expectations. High school support services and administrators conduct weekly SIT meetings to review student concerns for both identified and at-risk students, and determine proper interventions using a variety of data points to make decisions. Support staff organize team meetings, which may include teachers, families and students, on a case-by-case basis to meet the individual needs of students. 504 and Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings are held in a timely manner to address the learning needs of students. Special education goals and objectives are written to help transition students from the high school to post-secondary schools or occupations.

Various programs and strategies address the individual needs of students. These programs and strategies include, special education support program, an SRBI program, Capstone, the advisory program, elective courses, Career Cruising, assistive technology, adaptive exercise science, life skills, job shadowing, peer tutoring, and co-taught classes. Extra help is offered daily during academic labs, flex time and after school. Some students attend the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts which the district supports. Students also have the opportunity to apply to nearby vocational and agricultural schools.

Progress monitoring through formal and informal assessments drives support for identified students. Special education staff

instituted a self-advocacy calendar based on review of student IEP goals. The State Department of Education (SDE) provides yearly, targeted information regarding the performance of special education students, English language learners, and other subgroups on standardized testing, which is analyzed in order to identify areas of need by both subgroup and curricular area. In addition, the SDE also provides targeted feedback from surveys distributed to the parents of special education students. These surveys are conducted on a rotating basis, the most recent occurring during the 2010-2011 school year, in order to ensure that families can provide valuable feedback regarding their children's experience with special education. The school's small population of English language learners, currently there is only one ESL student, is tested on a yearly basis using the LAS Links standardized assessment in order to determine students' current levels of functioning and areas of need. Special education staff regularly monitor student progress toward IEP goals and objectives tailored to individual student needs, and are embedded as co-teachers in select classes. Triennial evaluations are conducted to ensure relevant, up-to-date information regarding special education student performance. As a result of support services collaboration with other staff identified students grow and succeed.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- central office personnel

Standard 6 Commendations

Commendation

The timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies available for all students

Commendation

The alignment of the developmental guidance program and the advisory curricula to Student Success Plans

Commendation

The use of technology by support services staff to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student

Commendation

The provision of an array of school counseling and support staff services and programs

Commendation

The written developmental school counseling curriculum and supplemental advisory curriculum

Commendation

The provision of preventative and direct intervention health care services

Commendation

The methods that the school uses to provide information to families that supports student learning

Commendation

The collaboration with staff and support of identified students that ensures their learning needs are met

Commendation

The commitment of the library media specialist to provide additional opportunities for teachers to use technology and to integrate it into their curriculum

Standard 6 Recommendations

Recommendation

Incorporate evidence of achievement of 21st century expectations into Student Success Plans

Recommendation

Develop and implement a program to address the career and post-secondary educational needs of identified special education students

Recommendation

Ensure that special educators and administrators have access to student grades through PowerSchool

Recommendation

Provide school-to-career personnel to create and co-ordinate opportunities for student transition, capstone, and internships/job shadowing

Recommendation

Re-allocate the school nurse's responsibility for making phone calls for unverified absences

Recommendation

Expand the library media center's collection of e-books and electronic resources available to staff and students

Recommendation

Institute a formal process for the library/media specialist to engage in the implementation of the school's curriculum

Recommendation

Schedule all students, grades 7-12, for an individual meeting with their school counselor

Standard 7 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The community and the district's governing body provide consistent and dependable funding for a wide range of programs and services, sufficient professional and support staff, a full range of technology support, sufficient equipment, and sufficient instructional materials and supplies. In most recent years, budgets for the Litchfield Public Schools have reflected marginal increases. There was a 0% increase in 2011-2012, a 0.99% increase in 2012-2013, and a 1.32% increase in 2013-2014. The proposed 2015-16 budget reflects a 4.18% increase of funding across all areas and programs, with increased per pupil funding. The proposed budget allows for a wide range of school programs and services for enrolled students, sufficient professional and support staff, updates to technology and equipment and sufficient instructional materials and supplies. While the school level budget contains a request for professional development and curriculum writing, in recent years this has not been funded. The Student Teacher Parent Council (STPC) raises funds to support programs and materials to enrich the curriculum. School faculty applies for grants from community groups, such as the Litchfield Education Foundation, to fund innovative programs and projects. Federal grants, such as the Perkins Grant, fund activities such as field trips for business and technology classes. LHS participates with other schools in some athletic programs, such as crew and ice hockey, and students pay out of pocket to participate in those sports. Athletics programs offered specifically at the school are fully funded. The results of the Endicott survey show 63.3 percent of students, 58 percent of parents, and 47.5 percent of staff agree that the community provides dependable funding for a wide range of programs and services. Staff (85.2 percent) and parents (67 percent) agree that there is an adequate number of teachers. Currently, there is no existing formally developed budget for professional development. Department-specific dues and fees were eliminated during the 2013-2014 budget process. The funding for mandatory certification for CPR and first aid for LHS athletic coaches was also cut from 2013-2014 budget. The current proposed budget does not include the reinstatement of funds for these areas. The budget does not currently provide additional money to support the curriculum writing process, and a formalized curriculum cycle that includes all departments is not in place. Although funding for professional development and curriculum writing has been available in recent years, this was limited in scope and is currently not part of a sustainable short- or long-term plan. Technology hardware and software are well-supported by the district's budget. In 2013, the entire high school building was equipped with wireless technology, and the current proposed budget includes a sufficient technology component. A one-to-one device program has been implemented, with 610 devices purchased and distributed to all students and to most of the staff. Twenty-four classrooms are equipped with SmartBoards with two additional portable SmartBoards located in the library media center and in the main computer lab, where classes can gather for lessons. Other equipment, such as software, projectors, flip cameras, document cameras, wireless keyboards, and scanners, is available for instructional purposes. In addition, the staff has access to copiers, fax machines, cameras, video equipment, and large format printers. Although technology has been purchased, a professional development plan for technology integration has not yet been implemented. Results of the Endicott survey indicate that 73.8 percent of staff agrees that there is adequate funding for a wide range of technology support. Instructional materials and supplies are provided to teachers upon request and based on needs. These materials and supplies include textbooks, e-books, office supplies, art supplies, and music supplies. In the 2013-2014 budget, funds for library materials and supplies were eliminated. However, with the rehiring of the library media specialist and a full-time TA for library media in January 2015, \$4,000 in materials and resources were purchased outright, with regular funding included in the proposed 2015-16 budget. Members of the community and the board of education are engaged in a purposeful commitment to provide dependable funding for school programs which supports the school's ability to meet the needs of all learners. (self-study, teachers, high school administrators, Endicott survey, school's website)

Sources of Evidence

- self-study

- teachers
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- school website

Standard 7 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Litchfield High School works in conjunction with the town facilities manager and the director of the Department of Public Works for the town of Litchfield to develop, plan, and fund programs that ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant. The Endicott survey reports a high level of cleanliness and upkeep of the facility. Eighty percent of staff agrees that the building is clean and well-maintained and 77 percent of students agree that the computer labs are in good working condition and that the furniture and equipment in the classrooms are in good condition. Among parents, 90 percent agrees that the school is clean and well-maintained; 76.6 percent agrees that the school develops and implements a plan to maintain and repair the facilities, plant, and equipment. During the 2012-13 school year, the board of education transferred school maintenance responsibilities directly to the town. After a transition period, the result has been improved function and oversight of the school facilities. Through the coordinated efforts of the director of Public Works and the town facilities manager (newly hired in late 2014), formalized day-to-day procedures, as well as short- and long-term planning have been put in place. Numerous ongoing projects are scheduled to take place in 2015, with further plans proposed and awaiting approval and availability of funding from the town in order to initiate and complete those projects that impact the facility. As the transition continues, a clear line of communication between the town facilities manager and the school administration needs to be strengthened. The facilities manager and director of Public Works attend meetings of the facilities and technology subcommittee of the board of education. The facilities manager regularly meets with the director of food services, and also conducts a weekly walk-through of the school site. This has led to improved communication and improved dissemination of facilities and maintenance information. A budding partnership is developing between the facilities manager and school administration. The facilities manager and the director of Public Works support the learning environment by scheduling projects around instructional time to minimize disruption. Examples include door replacements in the science area, and sorting and organization of custodial/maintenance materials found within the building (which will be moved to an external shed), all of which will take place during the upcoming April vacation week. However, the high school administration is not always aware of the work being planned; they were not aware of the plans to redo the science doors, for example. Additional regular communication between the LHS administration and facilities manager will help bridge this gap. The building is well maintained; repairs are made in a timely manner and a clear process of reporting and requesting facilities needs is in place. SchoolDude is currently used as the online portal with oversight by the new town facilities manager. Building maintenance occurs with clear plans for both short- and long-term replacement and upkeep of equipment. The custodial staff takes pride in the day-to-day cleanliness and upkeep of the facility, as is evident in the overall well-maintained condition of the facility. Examples of quick response time to facility needs include the retro-fitting of gymnasium lights within days of discovery of a potential safety issue; removal of a section of concrete directly outside of a set of doors when a frost heave prevented the doors from opening fully; and identification of a problem with the heating system in a classroom with custodial staff responding before the teacher reported the issue. All major facilities equipment are maintained and replaced based on a formal repair and replacement plan developed by facilities manager through the capital budget process. Equipment such as the boilers, large food service machinery, and the air-exchange devices are maintained on an annual basis and inspected as required by local or state agencies. Cleaning equipment and outdoor maintenance machinery are also cleaned and maintained on a regular schedule. Through combined efforts involving school representatives and town facilities personnel the school develops, plans, and funds programs and support the learning community.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- school board

- community members
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 3

Conclusions

The community funds and the school implements a long-range plan that addresses programs and services, enrollment projections and staffing needs, facility and technology needs, and capital improvements. The former superintendent and the Board of Education developed a five-year strategic action plan for 2010-2015. The district is currently in the process of a transition of leadership. The new superintendent, hired by Board of Education members, began in January 2015. Anticipated enrollment changes and staffing needs are also addressed by the community and the school. Enrollment projections are made with birth data and information received from area preschools and Head Start programs. The costs of contract negotiations and budget development are also included in the current proposed budget. The Litchfield teachers are in the first year of a newly negotiated contract that is in effect from July 1, 2014 through July 30, 2017. The transfer to the town of maintenance and custodial functions occurred during the 2012 - 2013 school year. The new facility manager began in November 2014. In his new role, he continues to explore cost-sharing opportunities. The town's Capital Improvement Board oversees the funding of capital improvements distributed through the Board of Education. While no formalized plan exists, planned capital improvements include a new gymnasium floor, replacement doors in the science wing and a new front sidewalk. A district-wide technology plan guides the technology budget. The finance, facilities and technology subcommittee of the Board of Education regularly reviews the district's technology plan. This review includes the district's technology capacity, as well as administrative and educational needs. The one-to-one initiative grew out of this review process. A long-range plan reflective of the vision and goals of the current leadership that addresses programs and services, professional development, facility and capital improvements as well as technology will serve as a road-map for the district to communicate with the community and the rationale and importance of planned and anticipated expenditures.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- school board
- central office personnel

Standard 7 Indicator 4

Conclusions

LHS faculty and building administrators are actively engaged in the development and implementation of the budget. A clear process exists. In October of every year, teachers discuss budgetary needs for the following year at department meetings. Curriculum coordinators review requests and determine budgetary priorities. The principal then meets with each curriculum coordinator. Some changes to departmental budgets may occur in these meetings. During the school year, the department coordinators have knowledge of the current account balances. Finally, the principal submits a budget proposal to the superintendent of schools no later than November 31st. Upon her review of the principal's proposal, the school budget is presented to the board of education for discussion and review by line item. Upon approval from the board of education, the budget is submitted to the board of finance. A number of public hearings may be scheduled prior to the formal vote by the community, beginning in late March. If the budget is rejected by the voters, the board of finance seeks public input on budget adjustments. Once passed, the board of education makes any final adjustments to the budget if required. If the budget is reduced, the principal has input in prioritizing the school budget allocations. The collective efforts of faculty and building administration in development and communication of budgetary needs positively impacts the opportunity for student success.

Sources of Evidence

- panel presentation
- school board
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 5

Conclusions

The Litchfield High School site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services throughout the facility. The initial facility was built in 1956 and has had several renovations, the most recent in 2005. Students (81.2 percent), parents (80.2 percent), and staff (78.7 percent) agree that the school site and plant support the delivery of high quality programs and services. The most recent renovations initiated in 2005 included changes to classrooms, the cafeteria, kitchen, and common areas. A school counseling and a career center are centrally located and easily accessible. A large addition to the building was made to allow for a wing exclusive to grades 7 and 8, with a new and updated nurse's office location. The athletic program enjoys an athletic training room and the gymnasium supports accessibility for hearing impaired. A full-service weight room was added during the renovation. This room is utilized by students in grades 7 through 12 and is part of the exercise science curriculum across grade levels. Athletic teams also use this room as part of their training. The high school science wing was converted during the renovation to include four instructional rooms with labs, a greenhouse, a teacher workroom, and extensive storage. The gymnasium was also renovated to include new bleachers and LED lighting, but lacks acoustical tiles. The choral room is adequate for instruction and can accommodate up to 65 students. The band classroom is a spacious amphitheater, which is adequate for instruction, with adequate room for instrument storage. However, the school plant lacks an auditorium for musical and theatrical performances, as well as for large school-wide assemblies. Instrument transportation to and from the Litchfield Intermediate School (LIS) auditorium results in quicker rates of depreciation and potential damage to instruments, and travel to LIS adversely affects instructional time. There are available funds allocated through bonding (2010/11) for upgrade of the currently outdated lighting system in the LIS auditorium space. In the art classrooms, proper ventilation was added to the kiln room, however, there is need for upgraded electrical outlets and infrastructure to ensure the safe use of items such as potter's wheels. Food services provides nutritious meals for students, faculty, and staff. The food service representative reports that the restaurant equipment is updated and serviced as needed with oversight from the town facilities manager. The school did have computer labs, all located in the high school, but with the recent implementation of the one-to-one technology approach, these spaces are in the process of being phased out. As these spaces open up, plans are in place to use them for academic resource centers. To support the one-to-one initiative, the entire building has a wireless infrastructure. The video technology program has a state-of-the-art broadcast center that is used to teach Video Production and used to air live and taped board of education meetings. While the computer equipment is eight years old, a computer replacement cycle is included in the current 2015-2016 budget. Additional playing fields were a charitable contribution of town land and are now governed by a non-profit organization, Plumb Hill Playing Fields, Inc. in collaboration with school and town personnel. These state-of-the-art playing fields are used for athletic programming. A well lit parking lot and walkways located across from LIS were also added; this provides additional parking for LHS and the community. The condition of the school site and plant enable all students, teachers, and community to fully experience the delivery of high quality school programs and services.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- school support staff
- Endicott survey

Standard 7 Indicator 6

Conclusions

The school adequately maintains up-to-date documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with fire, health, and safety regulations. The new facilities manager continues to be engaged in maintaining all documentation and scheduling for all required inspections from local, state, and federal agencies. Regular facility tours, oversight and custodial training is planned as part of an ongoing commitment to facility upkeep. Inspection documentation is posted near showers, eye-wash stations, fire extinguishers, and kitchen equipment. Duplicate inspection paperwork is stored by personnel or local vendors. All issues are reported immediately to the facilities manager. Work orders are developed in a timely manner and the system's operating budget includes a line item to fund any identified issues. Since the renovation, there has been a limited number of issues identified during inspections. However, the art room pottery area is in need of additional electrical access. The school facility is in compliance with federal and state laws, as well as local fire, health and safety regulations enabling teachers and students to meet their needs thereby achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- community members

Standard 7 Indicator 7

Conclusions

LHS faculty are committed to the process of engaging parents and families as partners in each student's education. However, the Endicott survey results report that 35.4 percent of families do not believe the school is effectively reaching out to them. The school has a number of established programs to engage parents and families as partners, including a fall Open House for grades 7 through 12 and a spring Meet and Greet for incoming 7th grade families. The Open House and Meet and Greet are scheduled in the early evening hours to accommodate as many parents as possible. The school uses the school's website, an email program called Constant Contact and the school publications of the student handbook and program of studies to inform parents and families. The student handbook and program of studies, published and posted to the school's website prior to the start of the school year, provide parents and students with information about the school schedule, school calendar, rules, course offerings, and student participation in co-curricular activities. By signing and submitting an acknowledgment form, students and parents verify that they have read and understand school policies and procedures. Announcements are made daily through the intercom system, and upcoming events and activities are posted throughout the building, on the school's webpage, and on television monitors throughout the building. Additionally, an event sign is at the corner of the street used to enter the LHS campus, on which event information is posted. Teachers frequently communicate with families through the use of technology, including individual teacher websites, email, PowerSchool, and video conferencing. To encourage families to use technology as a resource, staff offers communication via Skype, audio-visual presentations posted online for those who cannot attend evening workshops, and letters home with detailed access information for tools such as e-books, PowerSchool, Naviance, and Career Cruising. Technology staff assists families that need technical assistance. Teachers and support staff regularly update parents and families regarding student academic progress through these technology resources. Websites include information on assignments, resources, availability of extra help and course expectations. At the mid-point and the end of each quarter, every classroom teacher contacts the families of students who have a D or F. If a teacher does not receive a response via email, he or she will initiate contact by phone. Additionally, teachers regularly send notes home to families sharing positive news. In addition, parents are encouraged to schedule conferences with individual or small groups of teachers throughout the school year. The middle school teams offer daily meetings in the mornings and afternoons. High school teachers are also available by appointment and via email. Grade level team meetings with students and parents occur on an as-needed basis. Teachers regularly reach out to families and families often request these meetings. Meetings and interviews with parents and students indicated that while they feel like they have access to parents and teachers and PowerSchool, they do not feel they have an in-depth understanding of what the grades mean. Parent meetings revealed that parents feel teachers are available if they have questions or concerns. The athletics department maintains a separate webpage with event announcements and schedules. Support staff, including the school counselors, school psychologist, school nurse, and school social worker, have developed similar websites which include information for families about upcoming events, contact information, and community resources. To further engage parents and students in individual academic and post-graduation planning, all students are required to create and update a Student Success Plan, which addresses individual personal, academic, and career plans. Parents are invited to view their students' Success Plans online through Career Cruising. The school counseling department provides login information by mail and online tutorials that explain how to access student accounts. School counselors facilitate college and career planning; all juniors and their families are invited to attend individual planning meetings with school counselors. Incoming 9th graders and rising 11th graders and their families are also invited to small group course selection planning sessions. Parents are actively involved in the school, as members of committees or programs including the Substance Abuse Prevention Council or the Student Teacher Parent Council (STPC), or as speakers during advisory. Parents also serve as volunteers for field trips. Parents in STPC volunteer regularly during fundraisers, concession sales at basketball games, and the seniors' Class Night. Professional staff interacts with students and families regularly through participation as advisors, coaches, tutors, and volunteers. Over half of the professional staff is involved in these programs and serve as advisors or volunteers. As a result of the engagement of parents and families in all students' education, teachers have valuable support to assist them in ensuring the best education for all students.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- parents
- school leadership

Standard 7 Indicator 8

Conclusions

The school consistently seeks and maintains productive business, community, and higher education partnerships that support student learning and is in the process of expanding those partnerships. The grade 12 capstone, the job shadowing program, the partnership with Northwestern Connecticut Community College (NCCC), and programming through the Litchfield Community Center (LCC) and other local organizations such as Rotary International, Education Connection, the Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce, and the Litchfield Area Business Association, provide effective and integrated opportunities that support and enhance student learning. Capstone is an opportunity for seniors to have a teacher mentor with whom they organize a project plan that helps them pursue in-depth research of, or increased participation in, an area of special interest that is not offered in the program of studies or is limited in availability. Capstone will be required for all seniors beginning with the class of 2017. Students currently involved in capstone typically build connections with local businesses and organizations to help fulfill their project needs. The school counselors have isolated career clusters that students are interested in through career interest inventories. The school counseling department is working to develop job shadowing experiences for students through building a network of career resources. Many local organizations contribute to scholarship funds for graduating seniors. The Litchfield Scholarship Association, Inc. awarded \$251,800 to approximately 89 students last year to assist with the purchasing of books and other financial aid in their post-secondary experiences and the Student Teacher Parent Council (STPC) awards four \$500 scholarships to college-bound students. The Litchfield Education Foundation (LEF) also provides grant-funded opportunities for school and community programs. LHS works in close collaboration with the LCC. The center provides opportunities for students in grades 7-12 to enhance their personal development and educational experiences. There are numerous activities in which students regularly participate at the LCC, such as dances, art programs, philanthropy opportunities, cooking classes, babysitting classes, and trips to the movies, sporting events, campgrounds and amusement parks. The center is used for the pre-prom activities, semi-formal dances, and senior class nights. When there is active engagement in the development of parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships, the school strengthens its opportunities for the staff and students to meet the 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers

Standard 7 Commendations

Commendation

The wide variety of course offerings and educational opportunities available to students as a result of dependable funding from the district governing body

Commendation

The dedication of the school staff who volunteers their time and talents to ensure all students have positive extracurricular experiences

Commendation

The efforts of the town facilities manager in addressing needs of the school

Commendation

The efforts of the custodial and maintenance staff in keeping the school clean and maintained on a daily basis

Commendation

The collaborative development and implementation of the school budget which actively involves faculty and building administration

Commendation

The school site and plant which support the delivery of high quality school programs and services

Commendation

The efforts to develop productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnership that support student learning

Standard 7 Recommendations

Recommendation

Provide sustained, dependable funding for professional development and curriculum writing

Recommendation

Establish a consistent and effective process of communication between school leaders and town facilities personnel

Recommendation

Provide a state-of-the-art auditorium space to support and enhance student and school activities

Recommendation

Improve ventilation and increase number of electrical outlets in the art room

Recommendation

Improve connections with parents who have been less engaged with the school

Recommendation

Ensure dependable funding for library media services including personnel and materials and supplies

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 this school. The faculty, school board, and superintendent should be apprised by the building administration yearly of progress made addressing visiting committee recommendations.

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

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

To ensure that it has current information about the school, the Commission has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Commission within sixty days (60) of occurrence any substantive change which negatively impacts the school's adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The report of substantive change must describe the change itself and detail any impact which the change has had on the school's ability to meet the Standards for Accreditation. The Commission's Substantive Change Policy is included in the Appendix on page 15. All other substantive changes should be included in the Two- and Five-Year Progress Reports and/or the Annual Report which is required of each member school to ensure that the Commission office has current statistical data on the school.

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

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

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

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

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

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

Roster of Team Members

Chair

Alyson Geary - New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.

Assistant Chair

Sean McKenna - Robert E. Fitch High School

Visiting Committee Members

Paulina Auclair - Watertown High School

Tricia Brown - Nonnewaug High School

William Casertano - Ledyard High School

William Devlin - Darien High School

Nilda Irizarry - Fairfield Warde High School

Ken Jeremiah - South Kingstown High School

Sean Lewis - Woodland Regional High School

Sally Luzietti - Lewis S. Mills High School

Frank Quinn - Bloomfield High School

Mary Salerno - Berlin High School

Sara Scrofani - Naugatuck High School

Pamela Sickinger - Simsbury High School

Bobby Skarvelas - Glastonbury High School

Nicole Sklar - Marine Science Magnet High School of Southeastern Connecticut