New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Commission on Public Secondary Schools

Report of the Visiting Committee for
Stoughton High School

Stoughton, Massachusetts

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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 of Stoughton High School to be a privileged document submitted by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges to the principal of the school and by the principal to the state department of education. Distribution of the report within the school community is the responsibility of the school principal. The final visiting committee report must be released in its entirety within sixty 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 Stoughton High 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.

INTRODUCTION

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

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

As the responsible agency for matters of the evaluation and accreditation of public secondary school member institutions, CPSS requires visiting committees to assess the degree to which the evaluated schools meet the qualitative Standards for Accreditation of the Commission. 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 Commission's visiting committee, and the follow-up program carried out by the school to implement the findings of its own self-study and the valid recommendations of the visiting committee and those identified by the Commission in the Follow-Up process. Continued accreditation requires that the school be reevaluated at least once every ten years and that it show continued progress addressing identified needs.

Preparation for the Evaluation Visit - The School Self-Study

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At Stoughton High School, a committee of seven members 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 central office administrators, school committee members, students, and parents.

The self-study of Stoughton High School extended over a period of fourteen school months from October 2009 to February 2011.

Public schools evaluated by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools must complete appropriate materials to assess their adherence to the Standards for Accreditation and the quality of their educational offerings in light of the school's mission, learning expectations, and unique student population. In addition to using the Self-Study Guides developed by a representative group of New England educators and approved by the Commission, Stoughton 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 fifteen evaluators was assigned by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate Stoughton High School. The Committee members spent four days in Stoughton, 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 Commission's Standards for Accreditation. Since the evaluators represented public schools from three states - with central office administrators, school administrators, and teachers - diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Stoughton High School.

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

- review of the school's self-study materials

- 55 hours shadowing 15 students for a half day

- a total of 25 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 30 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and the assessment of student learning

- group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers

- the examination of student work including a selection of work collected by the school

Each conclusion on the report was agreed to by 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 Commission Standards.

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

Overview of Findings

Although the conclusions of the visiting committee on the school's adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation appear in various sections of this report, the committee

wishes to highlight some findings in the paragraphs that follow. These findings are not intended to be a summary of the report.

Teaching and Learning at Stoughton High School

There are many positive initiatives in place at Stoughton High School which result in a school culture that is positive and focused on teaching and learning within a safe and nurturing environment. At the same time, Stoughton High School faces challenges that must be met in order to provide an educational program that fully meets the needs of all students.

Stoughton High School has developed and published a research-based statement of core values and beliefs about learning as well as academic, civic, and social expectations for students, which together should allow for increased focus, direction, and consistency in the school's educational program. The school leadership team and full faculty now need to establish a formal review process, using multiple data sources and community input, to ensure the learning expectations and their accompanying school-wide rubrics reflect community priorities and fully challenge all students to reach their highest academic potential.

There is an array of course offerings and programs at Stoughton High School designed to meet the needs of a diverse student body. Although course syllabi exist for many of these course offerings, members of the professional staff must be involved in a formal process to develop written curriculum documents using a uniform template which prescribe content, integrate the school-wide learning expectations so that all students have sufficient opportunities to practice and master them in their coursework, include course-specific goals, and suggest instructional strategies and assessment techniques, including the formal use of the school-wide rubrics. Once these documents are developed for all disciplines, it is incumbent on the community and school district to provide sufficient instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and resources for the library/media center to fully support the curriculum.

Through our visits to classrooms, shadowing of students, examining student work, and interviewing teachers, the visiting team has observed that Stoughton High School has many caring and dedicated teachers who personalize instruction for students and integrate technology into their classrooms. Instructional strategies at Stoughton High School will be further enhanced with a significant increase in teachers using cross-disciplinary learning, emphasizing inquiry and higher order thinking, and engaging students as active and self-directed learners. The integration of technology can be further enhanced with increased technology support.

A comprehensive review of student work shows that teachers at Stoughton High School employ many varied assessment strategies to measure student knowledge, skills, and competencies and to assess student growth over time. There is also use of common assessment data by many departments to inform and adapt instruction in order to improve student learning. At the same time, there is a need for a formal process to measure and communicate individual student and whole-school progress in achieving the school's learning expectations. Time must be provided for teachers to meet formally to examine student work to identify and correct inequities and deficiencies in student learning.

Support of Teaching and Learning at Stoughton High School

At Stoughton High School, administrators and faculty and staff members work hard to create and maintain a safe, respectful, and supportive school culture. The principal is available to and connects with all constituencies, allowing for a shared vision and focus on student learning. At the same time, there needs to be a formal mechanism that allows for input and transparency in the decision-making process and a more consistent and reliable communication link with parents, students, and teachers. Stoughton High School also needs a program to provide students with an adult who knows them well and can assist in their achievement of the school's learning expectations.

There is ample evidence that all faculty members at Stoughton High School care deeply about the well-being of students and that student support personnel enhance student learning by interacting and working cooperatively with colleagues by utilizing school and community resources to address the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of the students. It is also apparent, however, that these efforts are seriously compromised by budgetary constraints. The reduction and, in some cases, the elimination of support service programs, resources, staff, and services clearly impede efforts to ensure that all students are afforded an equal opportunity to achieve the school's learning expectations.

The school community continues to be challenged to maintain a tired and heavily used facility which hinders the school's ability to achieve its core values and beliefs. The school community needs to fund, conduct, and implement a full evaluation of faculty and equipment needs. In addition, the community and the district's governing body must ensure a safe and adequate school site plant as well as appropriate programs, personnel, services, equipment, technological support, materials, and supplies to support student learning.

There is clear evidence that Stoughton High School is a successful school in many ways. The school community has the capacity and the desire to work together using the evaluation report and the NEASC Standards for Accreditation as a blueprint to provide educational excellence for the students of Stoughton High School.

School and Community Profile

The town of Stoughton is a community centrally located, 45 minutes from Boston, Providence and Cape Cod. Town neighbors are Canton, Easton, Brockton, Avon, Randolph, and Sharon. With as many as five major highways traveling through or within 10 minutes of the town, Stoughton is able to offer its residents and business community many of the conveniences of the big city yet with all of the tranquility and charm of a pleasant, suburban community. The town has a proud history, which includes the first meeting between Samuel Adams, Paul Revere and others at Doty's Tavern in August of 1774 to discuss independence from Britain, earning Stoughton the nickname "Birthplace of Freedom."

Stoughton's population remained slow in growth throughout most of the 20th century, until the post-war boom of the 1950s. In 2000, Stoughton had 27,149 residents. But in 2007, Stoughton's population declined by 1.3% to 26,951. The median age of residents also dropped to 39.2 years of age. There are 10,488 households in Stoughton, with an average of 2.6 residents in each. 3,710 Stoughton residents (13.7%) are foreign born (8.6% Europe, 2.4% Latin America, 1.6% Asia).[1] The primary employment opportunities in the town of Stoughton are in the medical, construction, insurance, professional and technical, and food services industries. As of December 2008, Stoughton's unemployment rate was at 6.4%.[2] As of December 2008, according to Division of Unemployment Assistance, the median income of residents was $69,942; the per capita income was $25,480; and the total labor force was 15,331. Ninety three percent of the workforce over the age of 18 works in Stoughton. 4.6% of Stoughton residents were living below the poverty level in 2007.

Eight public schools in Stoughton opened their doors to over 3,900 students in September 2009, providing a comprehensive education in all grade levels including Pre-Kindergarten through grade 12. The Jones School houses the Special Education Department for the town, Charms Collaborative, Stoughton Extended Day, the health clinic, and the town's Pre-School Program (66 students); Hansen Elementary, grades K-5 (296 students); Dawe Elementary, grades K-5, the TLC & the PAC Program (418 students); Gibbons Elementary, grades K-5, and the Elementary Adjustment Program (419 students); West School, grades K-5 (380 students); and South School, grades K-5, the PLC & the ILC Program (282 students). All Stoughton Public School students attend the O'Donnell Middle School (grades 6-8, 855 students) and Stoughton High School (grades 9-12, 1207 students). Six Stoughton school-age residents are home-schooled. As of January 1, 2009, the total number of high school age Stoughton residents who attend private schools was 110.

Stoughton Public Schools spent $10,282 per pupil in 2007 and $10,562 in 2008. Federal grants amount to $1,589,839 and state grants amount to $386,500. The state of Massachusetts allots $12,796,053 (36.6 %) and the town of Stoughton allots $22,184,191 (63.4 %) to equal a total of $34,980,194 funding for the school system. Stoughton is a Title I district; however SHS is not a Title I school. Students are enrolled in the Title I program at the West Elementary School and at the O'Donnell Middle School. The racial and ethnic composition of the student body has gradually become more diverse over the last five years. As of the 2009-10 school year its composition is 15.1% African American, 4% Asian, 4.9% Hispanic, 0.2% Native American, 73.8% White, 0.2% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 1.8% Multi-Race/Non-Hispanic.

Student enrollment at Stoughton Public Schools for 2009-10 school year totaled 3,776. The number of students in each grade K-12 for 2009 and 10 are as follows:

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[1] http://www.city-data.com/city/Stoughton-Massachusetts.html
[2] http://www.selfhelpinc.org/Stoughton.html

Kindergarten 256; First grade 278; Second 290; Third 316; Fourth 296; Fifth 292; Sixth 295; Seventh 288; Eighth 258; Ninth 311; Tenth 291; Eleventh 268; Twelfth 260. Of the 329 students in the 2009 cohort, 263 graduated. Of the 293 students in the 2008 cohort, 255 graduated. In 2007, 284 of the 337 students graduated in their cohort. 280 students graduated in 2009 and 260 are expected to graduate in 2011.

Twenty-four percent of the high school's student body was considered low-income for the 2009-2010 school year. Eighteen percent received free lunch, and 5.9% received reduced lunch. Approximately 23 students who have limited proficiency in English or whose first language is not English and approximately 180 special education students attended the high school in 2010. The school retained 2.1% of the student body during the 2007-2008 school year. The drop-out rate was 3.0% in 2009, 5.9% in 2008, and 4.1% in 2007.

The plans of Stoughton High School graduates from the 2007-2008 school year are as follows: 37% of graduates attend four-year private college, 27% attend a four year public college, 1% attend a two-year private college, 22% a two-year public college, 1% join the military and 9% chose to join the work force after graduation.

SHS runs on a modified rotating schedule. All science courses that require a lab have one extra block per cycle. Many AP (Advanced Placement) classes will have one extra block per cycle. There will be a combination of two and three block elective classes where some will run one semester and some all year. MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) Remediation courses will run in two block or three block configurations. The first class of the school day is 49 minutes long and the class period in which lunch occurs is 46 minutes. The other five instructional periods are each 53 minutes long. On regular school days, this schedule allows for 344 minutes of learning time for SHS students.

During the 2008-2009 school year Stoughton High employed 93 full time teachers. During that same year the Student/Teacher ratio was 13.2 to 1. Courses at Stoughton High are offered at College Prep, College, Honors and Advanced Placement levels. Full year courses are 5 credits each and half-day courses or every other day courses are 1.25 if they meet for half the year and 2.5 if they meet every other day for the entire year. Stoughton High offers 13 Advanced Placement courses. At present students need 115 credits to graduate. Stoughton had a 94.8% attendance rate of students at SHS for the 2009-2010 and an 83.8% graduation rate at SHS in 2009. During the 2010-2011 school year, all grade 10 and 11 students took the PSAT which was administered at Stoughton High School during the school day. Roughly 60% of our student body take the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and American College Testing Program (ACT) every year.

Beginning in 2009-2010, Stoughton High School offered an opportunity for students with varied learning styles to build the essential job readiness skills required to excel in the workforce. The Work Study program is comprised of two components: an educational curriculum and a required work experience. It is offered as a credit-bearing elective course for students in their senior year. In addition, a limited number of juniors who have completed multiple business courses through their high school career and who have secured director approval are allowed to register for the program.

The high school offers several settings for supplementary facilitation of the educational process. In addition, the Special Education Department offers a range of services, from in-class support through co-teachers and teaching assistants to academic labs when needed. Counseling as well as speech, language, physical and occupational therapy supports are also available to students.

To assist teachers with preparing rigorous academic courses, professional development is offered to all teachers in the Stoughton Public School system within the schools themselves. Many teachers pursue graduate coursework in their areas of specialty. All teachers are practicing within instructional areas per their Department of Education licensure. Most teachers have at least a master's degree in Education or their content area. A few teachers are working under initial or preliminary licensure, but are enrolled in the necessary coursework to achieve full licensure. 99.7 % of core academic classes are taught by teachers who are highly qualified. Currently, Stoughton High has 8 professional development meetings a year. Additionally, many teachers collaborate with others who teach similar courses.

Stoughton High School also receives funding in the form of grants. Many programs are enhanced by the opportunities these grants afford. In 2007, Stoughton Public Schools received $4,900,049 in grant funding. There are several grants specific to the high school. The Academic Support Services Grant is used to implement MCAS remediation and testing. The BAWID Grant provides funding for a youth program in career training. The Title IV, Part A: The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Grant is used to fund a drug awareness and prevention program. The Perkins Grant was used to fund professional development and purchase equipment in anticipation of new Engineering and Forensic Science courses and to support the Career Pathways Program for Career Vocational Technical Education (CVTE) students.

Stoughton High school also offers many extra-curricular activities including but not limited to: Buddies Club, Color Guard, DECA , Exclusive Knights, Fruition Scholars, Intramural Writing Competition, The Knight, Law Club, Math Team, Music Programs, National Honor Society, Peer Leadership, Peer Mediation, Photography Club, Recycling Club, S.A.D.D.(Students Against Destructive Decisions), Science Fair, Science Olympiad Team, Spectrum, Stoughtonian Yearbook, Student Council and Student Advisory Council. During the 2008-2009 school year, activity advisors report 840 participants in the various activities offered (students may be counted more than once, as the same student may participate in more than one activity).

Stoughton High School works with a substance abuse prevention group, Organizing Against Substances in Stoughton (OASIS) that was established in 2004. This organization has a mission of mobilizing the community towards a substance free state through youth-centered collaborations, data driven solutions. The intent of these collaborative efforts is to dramatically decrease the desire among youth to use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. During the 2011 Stoughton High School and OASIS are piloting a pre-prom event targeted at educating parents about the dangers and legal repercussion of aiding underage drinking.

The Stoughton Athletic program is a strong and well-supported program. At the high school, 40 teams are available to students at varsity, junior varsity, and freshmen levels. Stoughton Black Knight teams are members of the Hockomock League, which also includes Sharon, Canton, Foxboro, Attleboro, North Attleboro, Franklin, Mansfield, King Philip, and Oliver Ames. There are roughly 1207 students at SHS, of which 450 students (38.5% of student body) participated in one or more teams during the fall, winter and spring sports seasons.

Stoughton High School
Core Values and Beliefs about Learning

The Stoughton High School community fosters the development of responsible citizens who value high academic expectations, diversity, and excellence.

We believe that, academically, students at SHS:
- Develop skills over their entire career
- Have an opportunity to customize their educational plan and take advantage of a broad range of course offerings
- Maintain personal high academic expectations by taking challenging courses
- Receive an education focused on 21st Century skills
- Are taught by highly qualified teachers
- Receive differentiated instruction and assessment based on ability level and learning styles
- Have access to a variety of learning opportunities that meet their individual needs

We further believe that students at SHS:
- Receive a diverse experience in their education
- Receive and take advantage of opportunities to contribute positively and give back to the community
- Receive an education that encourages a global awareness
- Take personal responsibility for their learning
- Have opportunities to participate in career development programs
- Receive support services to help them succeed
- Are aware of services available to them to ease the transition to high school and college
- Are aware of extracurricular activities available to them and are encouraged to participate
- Have access to a safe environment

The SHS community has identified the following learning expectations for all students:

Academic
- The student communicates effectively.
- The student writes clearly and concisely.
- The student actively participates in the reading process.
- The student engages in analytical problem solving through critical thinking.
- The student utilizes technology.

Civic/Social
- The student contributes to the improvement of the community through organized activities beyond the classroom.
- The student demonstrates an understanding of and appreciation for diverse groups within the school, and the community.
- The student exhibits personal responsibility.

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES, INC.
COMMISSIONS ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

Curriculum

Instruction

Assessment of and for Student Learning

1 | Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

Effective schools identify core values and beliefs about learning that function as explicit foundational commitments to students and the community. Decision-making remains focused on and aligned with these critical commitments. Core values and beliefs manifest themselves in research-based, school-wide 21st century learning expectations. Every component of the school is driven by the core values and beliefs and supports all students' achievement of the school's learning expectations.

1. The school community engages in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research-based best practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning.

2. The school has challenging and measurable 21st century learning expectations for all students which address academic, social, and civic competencies, and are defined by school-wide analytic rubrics that identify targeted high levels of achievement.

3. The school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school, drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom, and guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations.

4. The school regularly reviews and revises its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, as well as district and school community priorities.

CONCLUSIONS

The Stoughton High School faculty were somewhat engaged in a dynamic, collaborative process informed by current research-based best practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning. A diverse committee of fifteen members worked on the revision of the school's mission in 2005. More recently, a smaller faculty committee developed the core values and 21st century learning expectations working from that mission. The faculty committee used research-based best practices discussed collaboratively to develop the core values and learning expectations. The committee was multidisciplinary, but there was very little input from other stakeholders. According to the self-study, the rubrics were distributed for implementation in September of 2009, but the faculty did not approve the final statement of core values and 21st century learning expectations until March of 2010. Currently, 60% of parents indicate the school's 21st century learning expectations were unclear to them. In order to sustain the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations, committee members acknowledged the importance of having broader stakeholder input, especially the need for more student and parent input and feedback on school programs such as parent conferences, community service requirements, the implementation of the new advisor/advisee program, and the school's core values and beliefs about student learning. Without more stake-holder input, Stoughton High School cannot attain consensus on, ownership in, and full implementation of their core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. (mission committee, self-study, teachers, Endicott Survey)

Stoughton High School has measurable but not challenging 21st century learning expectations for all students, addressing academic, social, and civic competencies. These competencies are somewhat defined by school-wide analytic rubrics that identify targeted levels of achievement. These standards are comprehensive and measurable and are aligned with the school's core values and beliefs. A formal process to assess the success of the school in meeting the expectations for student learning has not been created, however, nor have academic expectations been identified within the program of studies. While the learning expectations are generally defined by school-wide analytic rubrics with targeted levels of achievement, the rubrics are not consistently utilized by all teachers. The analytic rubrics use familiar terms in describing levels of achievement, such as "Advanced/Exemplary", "Proficient", "Needs Improvement", and "Failing", and they are written broadly, allowing for their use across a wide range of student abilities. There is at least one analytic rubric for each academic, civic, and social expectation that can be used for all students. Some parents comment, however, that they do not have a clear understanding of the school's core values or specific learning expectations, and they express concern that there is not enough school support for their children to achieve them. On the other hand, 50% of students state that they do not find the learning expectations challenging. One civic and social expectation requiring that students participate in organized activities outside of the classroom for at least one year while they are at Stoughton High School assumes that all students are able to participate. Faculty members raise the concern that some students have outside commitments and already struggle to feel included in the school, and that this requirement could further alienate them and give them an additional requirement they will not be able to meet. With the current loss of funding for some advisor positions, this requirement may also not be supported through the school budget. Building administrators cite the objective of establishing an advisory committee next year to help the school achieve a uniform connection between its civic and social expectations and what the students are doing in their classes. Most teachers have only a passing awareness of the core values and learning expectations and cannot identify specific learning expectations. Stoughton High School has positioned itself to realize its goal of ensuring that every student attains the necessary 21st century skills through its development of learning expectations and rubrics, but until there is a thorough review of the current learning expectations and school-wide rubrics for each academic, civic, and social expectation by all faculty members, the school cannot ensure that the targeted level of successful achievement fully

challenges and supports all students to reach their highest academic potential and that the expectations are universally appropriate. (self-study, teachers, students, leadership, parents)

Stoughton High School's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations are beginning to appear in the culture of the school, but they do not yet drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom, nor do they always guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations. The principal, however, cites the learning expectations while advocating the reinstatement of the position of the media specialist and the restoration of more advisor stipends. Student participation in after school clubs and activities is a civic and social learning expectation because it contributes to a sense of community at the high school and is developmentally appropriate for adolescents. The delay in identifying class officers, however, has reduced the potential for student voice in the school and diminished the opportunity for students to contribute to the improvement of the community through organized activities beyond the classroom. The district is currently updating its curriculum and instruction documents using the Understanding by Design model, and department leaders plan to incorporate Stoughton High School's core values into their revised curriculum and instruction. While some departments, such as English, have begun to move forward with this, however, other departments have not yet begun this process. While the core values and beliefs have driven decisions about changing the schedule to improve the implementation of science laboratory classes and the work study program, researching advisory programs, and creating some freshman team classes, many teachers feel disconnected from this decision-making process. The loss of funding for some activity advisor positions runs counter to the requirements of the civic and social learning expectations. Until every component and decision of Stoughton High School is aligned with and driven by its core values and beliefs, the school will be unable to ensure it is supporting all students' achievement of the school's learning expectations.   (mission committee, school leadership, department leadership, teachers)

Stoughton High School does not have a mechanism in place to regularly review and revise its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, and district and school community priorities. While previous revisions have occurred, a formal and inclusive process which includes the use of school-generated data to regularly review the effectiveness and appropriateness of these values and expectations for student learning has not been established. The school leadership has not put into place a process and timeline for the regular review and revision of its core values, beliefs, and learning expectations which includes teachers, parents, students, administrators, and representatives of the community at large. Without the input from and acceptance by the entire school community, the 21st century learning expectations cannot be embedded into the school's educational programs and culture. (mission committee, school leadership, self-study, teachers)

Commendations

1. The research-based best practices used by the faculty to develop the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations

Recommendations

1. Ensure the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school, drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom, and guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations

2. Develop and implement a formal, inclusive process to review and revise the core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations using research, multiple data sources, and district and school community priorities
3. Review and revise the school-wide rubrics for each academic, civic, and social expectation to ensure that the targeted level of successful achievement fully challenges and supports all students to reach their highest academic potential

2 Curriculum

The written and taught curriculum is designed to result in all students achieving the school's 21ˢᵗ century expectations for student learning. The written curriculum is the framework within which a school aligns and personalizes the school's 21ˢᵗ century learning expectations. The curriculum includes a purposefully designed set of course offerings, co-curricular programs, and other learning opportunities. The curriculum reflects the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The curriculum is collaboratively developed, implemented, reviewed, and revised based on analysis of student performance and current research.

1.   The curriculum is purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21ˢᵗ century learning expectations.

2.   The curriculum is written in a common format that includes:
   - units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills
   - the school's 21ˢᵗ century learning expectations
   - instructional strategies
   - assessment practices that include the use of school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics.

3.   The curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through:
   - inquiry and problem-solving
   - higher order thinking
   - cross-disciplinary learning
   - authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school
   - informed and ethical use of technology.

4.   There is clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum.

5.   Effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation exist between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district.

6.   Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are sufficient to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities.

7.   The district provides the school's professional staff with sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research.

CONCLUSIONS

The Stoughton High School curriculum has not been purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations. While rubrics have been created to ensure that every teacher assumes responsibility for student achievement of the learning expectations, most curriculum guides are not aligned with these expectations. All departments focus on all learning expectations, so there is no allocation of specific learning expectations by curriculum area exists. With Stoughton High School's 21st century learning expectations only recently developed, where students will practice and apply these skills is not clearly established in the grade level and course level curricula. Learning expectations are not currently used to inform the addition and deletion of courses from the curriculum. While the majority of curriculum guides do not identify clear connections between course content and the learning expectations, many courses offer learning experiences that sometimes do relate to the school's learning expectations. Most of the teachers note that they incorporate the school's civic and social learning expectations into their lessons despite the fact that these are not explicitly included in the curriculum guides. In the future, the school hopes to meet these civic and social learning expectations through the proposed advisory program. The lack of alignment between the school's 21st century learning expectations and its written curriculum and the limited use of these expectations to design course offerings restrict the opportunities for students to practice and achieve Stoughton High School's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, teachers, curriculum guides, school leadership committee)

While curriculum guides for each department are in place, most are not written in a common format that includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills; the school's 21st century learning expectations; instructional strategies; and assessment practices that include the use of a school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics. While the majority of curriculum guides shares common elements such as objectives, concepts, suggested activities, and assessment tools, they are not all written in the same format, they vary by department and development date, and few contain essential questions. The assistant superintendent recently introduced a new system-wide curriculum database that follows a common format based on the Understanding by Design model and incorporates essential questions for each unit. Very few written documents have been converted to the new format at this time. Stoughton High School plans to devote future professional development time to aligning all curriculum documents to the Understanding by Design format and making them available on the high school's internal server. While the school's learning expectations and school-wide rubrics have been updated to reflect the new 21st century learning expectations, the alignment of the current curriculum guides to the learning expectations has not been completed in the majority of departments, and the newly adopted Understanding by Design template does not require specific references to the 21st century learning expectations derived from the school's core beliefs. None of the current curriculum documents explicitly includes assessments that use the school-wide analytic rubrics, although some departments have the seven school-wide rubrics attached to the back of their course curriculum guides. Most of the curriculum documents include suggested forms of assessment, but none of the documents refers to course-specific rubrics even though many teachers employ course and project-specific rubrics in their practice. There is also inadequate implementation of a media literacy curriculum since the position of the media center specialist was eliminated in the 2009-2010 year and remains unfilled. Plato online courses, which are used as alternative routes to learning, are based on the curriculum provided by Plato and, hence, do not reflect Stoughton's 21st century learning expectations. Because there is no common format that includes units of study, the learning expectations, instructional strategies, and assessment practices that include the use of school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics, Stoughton High School's curriculum does not provide a framework within which the school can align and personalize

the 21st century learning expectations for its students and ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to learn and achieve these expectations. (curriculum guides, teachers, self-study)

The curriculum does not consistently emphasize depth of understanding and application of knowledge through inquiry, problem-solving, higher order thinking, cross-disciplinary learning, and authentic opportunities both in and out of school, but it does encourage an informed and ethical use of technology. A review of student work also reveals varying teacher expectations of what constitutes higher order thinking. School surveys show there is a lack of consensus among administrators, teachers, and students about these expectations, and classroom observations show inconsistent expectations of academic rigor by different teachers. Stoughton High School implemented the use of the John Collins focus correction areas across all levels of 9th and 10th grade classes several years ago. Several teachers express concern that the level of rigor needed for the new learning expectations conflicts with the use of this program. The curriculum guides from some departments offer teachers goals and objectives, but they do not all support the depth of understanding needed by students. Common assessments that contain a variety of higher order thinking questions have been adopted by several departments, however, and are designed to measure the acquired skills of all levels of students. The student handbook, which is discussed by home base teachers at the beginning of the year, features a section on technology that includes proper uses of the Internet, cell phones, and other electronic devices. Many computer labs contain SynchronEyes, a computer program that allows teachers to monitor student activity on computers. Furthermore, individual teachers, particularly those who have classes in computer labs, stress the importance of ethical behavior while using technology through the implementation of classroom contracts and plagiarism policies. No formal code of conduct for computer usage is posted in computer labs or other classrooms, however. Several professional development days have been allotted to the development of technology-related curriculum, which may vary by department. The school currently offers a few cross-disciplinary courses. These courses include American Studies, Engineering, Robotics, and Forensic Science. Stoughton High School also has a ninth grade "team" whose participating teachers are given common preparation time in order to meet with parents, discuss student needs, and plan possible cross-disciplinary lessons. Many teachers, however, note a lack of time for collaboration in professional development workshops and meetings. While some cross-disciplinary planning does take place, this is accomplished informally through the initiative of individual teachers. Some classes travel to local businesses to observe and apply in real world environments the 21st century practices they learn in class. The work study program allows some students to leave the traditional classroom environment to prepare for possible future occupations. Some teachers have taken students to festivals and competitions and on field trips to expose them to various learning and cultural experiences, yet several other teachers and many students feel that all students should be able to engage in these opportunities. Limited opportunities for students to be exposed to cross-disciplinary curriculum, higher order thinking, and authentic learning opportunities diminish the equitable opportunity for all students to achieve the 21st century learning expectations. (student work, self-study, teachers, classroom observations, student shadowing)

There is frequent alignment between the written and taught curriculum. There are four practices in place to ensure that the written curriculum is taught. During some departmental professional development days, teachers have time to discuss the implementation of the curriculum. There is an extensive evaluation process which includes formal, informal, and self-evaluation to ensure the delivery of the written curriculum. Teacher plan-books are reviewed by department directors every two weeks, and common assessments, in particular midyear and final exams, are administered in most courses to ensure that there are no major discrepancies in the delivery of the curriculum. In addition, many teachers engage in informal collaboration and peer observations regarding delivery of the curriculum. A few teachers maintain websites to inform both students and parents about what is being taught in the

classroom. Because many written curriculum guides need updating, however, the alignment between written and taught curriculum is sometimes sacrificed in order to teach newer content. In addition, some teachers are not familiar with their curriculum documents nor where they are kept, making it difficult to form judgments about alignment of written and taught curriculum in all departments across the school. Even though teaching is frequently aligned with the written curriculum, most of the curriculum documents do not explicitly and purposefully include opportunities for students to practice and achieve the school's learning expectations. All students are not, therefore, consistently provided opportunities to practice and achieve Stoughton High School's 21st century learning expectations. (department leaders, teacher meetings, teacher interviews, self-study, curriculum guides, leadership committee)

There is some curricular coordination and vertical articulation between and among certain academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district. While there is time for collaboration among cross-disciplinary courses, it is not allocated for vertical articulation and curricular coordination among all teachers. Ninth grade team teachers have time built into their schedules to collaborate, but this time is limited to those teachers assigned to this team. Most teachers provide common assessments in most subjects in order to coordinate curriculum within the school. The department directors are involved in K-12 vertical alignment and collaboration at monthly steering committee meetings. Steering committees are in place to evaluate the needs of specific core-subject departments' curriculum and vision. The members of the steering committees include the assistant superintendent, assistant principals of the high school and middle school, department directors, and middle school head teachers. For the 2010-2011 school year, some departments have been combined, leading to fewer steering committee members to address the needs of individual subject area curricula. This change has negatively impacted the coordination of curriculum in some departments and has prevented some growth in curriculum development. The Advisory Council for Curriculum Excellence for Stoughton Students Together Everyone Achieves More (ACCESS) Team meets with the superintendent and the assistant superintendent approximately six times throughout the school year to discuss curricular and departmental updates. There are a few representative guides of a district K-12 curriculum. Thus, even though some procedures are in place for planning and revising curriculum, not all curriculum is coordinated and vertically aligned, hindering the effective delivery of the curriculum across disciplines and across the grades. (central office administrators, teachers, curriculum guides, self-study)

Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are not sufficient to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs, and other learning opportunities. The district made the commitment to maintaining smaller class sizes, but this decision has negatively impacted other important programs and services and all students, particularly with the elimination of a media specialist. In addition, limits on the budget for substitute teachers have led to a system where classes with absent teachers often report to the cafeteria where they are supervised by two permanent substitute teachers. As a result of this practice, the delivery of lesson plans and the written curriculum may be sporadic. In the co-curricular area, the freshman class and numerous after school clubs and activities have lost their advisors through budget constraints, and insufficient funding has led to a decreased technology support staff. The limited technology support staff cannot meet all the demands of a school reliant on computers and software to support the delivery of its curriculum. There is inadequate funding for instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies and library-media resources. Some textbooks are outdated, and students do not have access to an adequate number of computers or printers to conduct research or compose multi-media presentations in their classrooms, labs, or the media center. While almost all classrooms have interactive SMARTBoards, the school's hardware and software needs have been significantly underfunded over the past three years. In addition, the media center has not been able to purchase or update journal

subscriptions, videos, or other resource materials that supplement the curriculum. The media center lacks access to academic data bases as well as current paid subscriptions for magazines and periodicals. Many books in the collection are outdated, and no new books have been purchased over the past two years. Problems with the facility impede some delivery of the curriculum. Laboratory space for science courses is limited. The special education department does not have an appropriate room for testing to determine appropriate accommodations for delivery of the curriculum or to host meetings. The alternative learning program's delivery of the curriculum is also impeded by the fact that these teachers do not have their own classrooms, preventing effective monitoring of student behavior, and there is no designated place for students with emotional or behavioral issues should an issue arise. Another area of concern is the lack of accessibility to the fourth floor in the A Building and the availability of only a single elevator for all five buildings. If a student who has a class on the fourth floor is disabled or injured, the entire class must relocate to the second floor. If space is not available, the injured students go to the nurse's office during the class time for the duration of their injury, and their work is delivered to them to complete. Because some staffing, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facility areas, and resources of the media center have been adversely impacted by the budget, the delivery of the curriculum is impeded, and all Stoughton High School students are hampered in their opportunities to practice and achieve the 21st century learning expectations. (curriculum guides, teachers, students)

The district provides Stoughton High School's professional staff with limited personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research. Over the last two years, opportunities for paid summer work to revise and/or develop curriculum have been cut in half due to lack of funds. Professional development hours are offered on late arrival and early release days, but teachers within specific departments primarily develop curriculum on their own time. While a few departments have been able to reserve time for professional development on integrating the SMARTBoard technology into their curriculum, these departmental hours are not always dedicated to work on the curriculum. Teachers say they have little time to review the curriculum, and as a result, the curriculum is not regularly reviewed, updated, and revised. Most teachers use common midterms and finals within departments, and some departments analyze student performance and comprehension based on the item analysis data from these tests to make further modifications to the curriculum. With support from the assistant superintendent, the principal is responsible for the school level curriculum coordination, articulation and implementation. There is no regular curriculum review cycle, but the district is currently in the process of revising and converting the existing curriculum documents into the Wiggins' Understanding by Design format. The teachers hope that this conversion will also address the school's learning expectations. The school does not currently use data collected from assessments of the school's learning expectations to make revisions to the curriculum. Administrators may be using research based on the 21st century learning model to guide the development of curriculum at Stoughton High School, but the limited personnel, time, and financial resources available for faculty members to evaluate and revise the curriculum do not support the students' opportunities to achieve their 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, teachers, school leadership, department leaders)

Commendations

1. The embedding of technology into the curriculum by some teachers
2. The teachers' initial efforts in standardizing curriculum guides in ways that will help their students gain opportunities for practicing 21st century learning skills

Recommendations

1. Implement the use of a common curriculum format in all subject areas which includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills; the school's learning expectations; instructional strategies; and assessment strategies, including the use of school-wide rubrics
2. Ensure that all students have multiple opportunities to practice and achieve the school's 21st century learning skills
3. Ensure adequate supervision of the curriculum development process at the school level
4. Provide appropriate staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center to fully implement the curriculum
5. Provide the school's professional staff with sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research
6. Provide formal opportunities for faculty members to create cross-curricular units within and across disciplines

3 Instruction

The quality of instruction is the single most important factor in students' achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Instruction is responsive to student needs, deliberate in its design and delivery, and grounded in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. Instruction is supported by research in best practices. Teachers are reflective and collaborative about their instructional strategies and collaborative with their colleagues to improve student learning.

1. Teachers' instructional practices are continuously examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations.

2. Teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by:
    - personalizing instruction
    - engaging students in cross-disciplinary learning
    - engaging students as active and self-directed learners
    - emphasizing inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking
    - applying knowledge and skills to authentic tasks
    - engaging students in self-assessment and reflection
    - integrating technology.

3. Teachers adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by:
    - using formative assessment, especially during instructional time
    - strategically differentiating
    - purposefully organizing group learning activities
    - providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom.

4. Teachers, individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices by:
    - using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments
    - examining student work
    - using feedback from a variety of sources, including students, other teachers, supervisors, and parents
    - examining current research
    - engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice.

5. Teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices.

CONCLUSIONS

Teachers' instructional practices are not continuously examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations. Some teachers are starting to implement the 21st century learning expectations to drive instruction, but few have posted learning expectations or lesson objectives in their classrooms although many post a daily agenda. There is also a lack of consistency in the understanding and application of the 21st century school-wide rubrics. There is confusion among directors and teachers about the use of school-wide and assignment-based rubrics and how they should inform instruction. Teachers report that the school-wide rubrics are generally not given to students when activities are assigned. Seventy-five percent of the teachers report not using the school-wide rubrics at all for months, and few students are able to explain Stoughton High School's definition of 21st century learning expectations. Teachers frequently examine their instruction by revising and varying lesson plans in isolation or using common planning time to do so informally. Some teachers have implemented 21st century learning expectations using technology through interactive white boards, student presentations, First Class electronic communications, and the utilization of some rubrics on assignments, but teachers overall report decreased professional development time focused on creating rubrics and incorporating 21st century learning expectations into instructional practices due to other priorities. The absence of formal scheduled time dedicated to continuous self-reflection of instructional practices and 21st century learning expectations does not support the school's efforts to foster the understanding and use of its core values and beliefs. (teachers, panel presentation, student work, department leaders, student shadowing)

Most teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by personalizing instruction. Eighty percent of teachers believe that they personalize instruction. Although only 41% of students and 27% of parents believe that teachers personalize instruction, interviews with teachers and observations of student work indicate that personalization of instruction is taking place in a number of classes. Many teachers routinely give students choices within projects and assignments. Teachers use supplemental reading, modeling, pacing, and manipulatives. Teachers also facilitate peer to peer student collaboration to support students with different levels of need within and outside of the classroom. (teachers, self-study, student shadowing, classroom observations, school committee members, Endicott Survey, students, student work)

Some instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by engaging students in cross-disciplinary learning. Examples of formal cross-curricular academic programs include the American Studies course offered to juniors that integrate the English and social studies curriculum, as well as Forensics and some engineering courses. Common readings, the John Collins Writing Program, the science fair, theme weeks, and other faculty-driven initiatives are used in cross-disciplinary learning. (teachers, self-study, student shadowing, classroom observations, school committee members, Endicott Survey, students, student work)

Some teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by engaging students as active and self-directed learners. Examples of these include projects where students work in competitive teams to create photographs which represent students' names in a creative way and students design and construct locker organizers by working through a process of inquiry in engineering. Some world language students are encouraged to speak freely about their lives in the target language. Many students at all levels work on science fair projects and the construction challenge. (teachers, self-study, student shadowing, classroom observations, school committee members, Endicott Survey, students, student work)

Some teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by emphasizing inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking. In a faculty survey, teachers state they emphasize these skills, but samples of student work and classroom observations provide few examples of students engaging in problem-solving, inquiry, and higher order thinking. (teachers, self-study, student shadowing, classroom observations, school committee members, Endicott Survey, students, student work)

Some teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by asking students to apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks. The guidance department, business classes, and some English classes ask students to create resumés for college and work. Projects in many other classes ask students to work on assignments that are relevant to the outside world. Several teachers ask students to think about how the topic of the day relates to real world applications. Stoughton High School also offers a work study program where a small number of students earn credit for hours they spend in the workplace. (teachers, self-study, student shadowing, classroom observations, school committee members, Endicott Survey, students, student work)

Some teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by engaging students in self-assessment and reflection. Seventy percent of students report that they are able to assess their own work. While examples of student work reveal the use of student reflection, self-assessment, and peer editing, this practice does not appear to be wide spread. Many teachers use examples of Type 4 Collins writing assignments where students review and peer edit written work before submission. Students in an intensive reading course self-assess their performance in a play and compare themselves to others. (teachers, self-study, student shadowing, classroom observations, school committee members, Endicott Survey, students, student work)

Many teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by integrating technology. Stoughton High School has an enviable ratio of 1.78 students per modern computer. Sixty-nine percent of teachers report using technology in their daily instruction, and 13% of teachers have a classroom website. English, world language, and business classes have access to computer labs where each student has a computer to complete assignments during class time. Music, video production, and engineering classrooms contain some student computers for in-class use. Science classes have access to a cart of notebook computers where students share computers. Most classes have a difficult time signing out computer labs in advance, however. (teachers, self-study, student shadowing, classroom observations, school committee member, Endicott Survey, students, student work)

The ten student computers in the media center are often not available for student access before, during, and after school. When creating assignments, teachers are sensitive to students' ability to access technology outside of the classroom, and some of them limit assignments that require the use of technology. SMARTBoard interactive whiteboards have been installed in almost all classrooms at Stoughton High School, and some teachers have received professional development on how to incorporate the technology in their instruction. In one class, students are asked to research an extremist group using the Internet and to create a PowerPoint that summarizes an accompanying research paper. Students in a computer music course use Garage Band software to create a five section song containing instruments and melodies. While many teachers incorporate Internet research and PowerPoint presentations into their instruction, the lack of dedicated, on-site technology support occasionally hinders the teachers' ability to provide consistent integration of technology. While the use of various learning projects, the personalization of instruction, and the integration of technology provide a more engaging learning experience for students, the limited opportunities for students to engage in cross-

disciplinary learning, inquiry, higher order thinking, and self-assessment and reflection, as well as apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks and be active and self-directed learners, hinders the ability of the Stoughton High School students to achieve the school's learning expectations. (teachers, self-study, student shadowing, classroom observations, school committee members, Endicott Survey, students, student work)

Many teachers adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by using formative assessments, especially during instructional time. Teachers use homework, pre-tests and dip sticking to assess students' understanding. Teachers often re-teach the concept or use manipulatives if students need more assistance. Departments look at summative assessments such as MCAS, mid-terms, and final exams to plan adjustments to the curriculum. Although some teachers use surveys and feedback from students to improve their instruction, there is little widespread use of common formative assessments. There is also a lack of understanding among the teachers on the differences between and uses of formative and summative assessments. (teacher interviews, district documents, student work, self-study, teacher meetings)

Some teachers adjust instructional practices to meet the needs of each student through strategic differentiation. Examples of differentiated instruction include teachers using challenging questions for stronger students and adjusting the timing of student responses to a PowerPoint presentation based on additional processing time needed by some students. Over 86% of teachers self-report differentiating instructional practices to meet the learning styles of all students, but only 41% of parents believe that teachers modify instruction based on students' progress. In addition, some teachers appear to place the responsibility solely on the student to learn or rely on leveling as a means of meeting varying student needs rather than differentiating their instruction to teach a heterogeneous group. Despite small class sizes, some teachers report difficulty focusing on individual needs in a 50 minute class period. (teachers, self-study, students)

Some teachers adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by purposefully organizing group learning activities. Many teachers use SMARTBoards to deliver instruction, and some teachers use these SMARTBoards in an interactive and engaging way. Many teachers provide cooperative group learning activities, and 79% of students report that their teachers use group activities in class. Students show a variety of engagement levels in different classes. (teacher interviews, district documents, student work, self-study, teacher meetings)

Most teachers at Stoughton High School adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom. Although only 40% of students report one-on-one time with their teachers, many teachers stay after school to help struggling students. Seventy-one percent of parents report that teachers provide additional support to students when needed. Teachers work to meet the needs of their students by using formative assessments to adjust their instructional practice, organizing group learning activities, and providing additional support to students both in and out of the classroom. Additionally, the school has many programs to help students who are struggling or at risk including Stoughton Academy, Alternative Education, a program for students on the autism spectrum, and a program for students with emotional problems. The school also offers two programs (Step Up to Excellence and Fruition Scholars) which provide emotional or financial support for minority or low income students who are college bound. Even with these programs in place, however, the limited strategic differentiation and the focus of responsibility for student learning solely on the students by some teachers hinder the school's ability to ensure that all students can successfully achieve 21st century learning expectations. (teacher interviews, teacher meetings, self-study, school committee members, facilities tour, student shadowing)

Some teachers, especially in the math and English departments, individually and collaboratively improve their instructional practices by using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments, by examining student work, and by using feedback from a variety of sources including students, other teachers, supervisors, and parents. In department meetings, department directors and some teachers examine common summative assessments such as midterms, finals, and the MCAS test results to analyze trends and plan for adjustments, such as student placement in classes or prioritizing certain content topics. There is little parent or peer feedback to improve instructional practices, other than from the peer mentors assigned to new teachers. Some teachers incorporate student feedback or examination of students' writing to improve their instruction, but this is often done at the end of the course when students cannot benefit personally from changes or explanations. (students, teachers, self-study, instruction committee)

Some teachers, individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices by examining current research. Because of the lack of time formally dedicated to this purpose, teachers must examine current research individually through teaching at the graduate level or attending graduate courses or conferences. Courses for graduate programs are available on site. Financial restrictions reduce access to professional journals, and much of the work involved in examining current research is done on the teachers' own personal time. (teacher interviews, district documents, student work, self-study, teacher meetings)

Some teachers formally engage in professional discourse focused on instructional practice. Teachers informally discuss instructional practices in conversations at lunch or after school. Some teachers report that they do not have the time to do this, even informally. Teachers reflect on their work on a more individual basis, however, and some collaborate to examine student work to improve their instruction. Teachers will be able to provide students with more opportunities to improve their learning if they are able to collaboratively examine student work and discuss research throughout the school year as opposed to trying to do this individually or the school expecting it to be done solely by department directors or at the end of the school year. Students will also be more likely to achieve the 21st century learning expectations if teachers obtain feedback from students and parents to improve instructional practices during the school year. (teacher interviews, district documents, student work, self-study, teacher meetings)

Most teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content-specific instructional practices. Most teachers (96.4%) are highly qualified and most (95.2%) are certified in the content area in which they teach (2009-2010). The school district offers college and masters level courses on campus for staff members. Seventy-two percent of the teachers have advanced degrees. Most students (80%) report that their teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach, while only 60% of parents feel that teachers maintain expertise in their subject area. There is an intensive teacher mentoring program which culminates in a portfolio by the end of the second year. Teachers submit an individual professional development improvement plan (IPDIP) and are observed every other year. Teachers also submit a reflection journal on alternating years. Both teachers and department directors report that observations and feedback provided by the department directors are helpful. Teachers submit their plan books to the department directors for review every two weeks. Department directors use the Skillful Teacher model and recommend peer observations to help struggling teachers. However, with the combining of different departments, some department directors do not feel sufficiently skilled in a different content area to provide meaningful guidance other than classroom management. There is also a practice of using substitutes to supervise multiple classes in the cafeteria. These substitutes do not teach, but supervise classes as a study hall. Most teachers do appear to have current knowledge of research-based practices. Department directors report using current research

journals, such as NSTA, although this varies by department. With assistant superintendent approval, directors can request in advance to use professional development time during seven half-days to provide training and facilitate professional discourse. This needs to be set up in advance, however, and is not easily changed. Teachers stay after school for an hour before these half-days to attend training and department meetings as well. Teachers have attended professional development focusing on the use of rubrics, technology integration, and best practices. School administrators, department directors, and curriculum coordinators attend monthly meetings along with district administrators to discuss curriculum and the transition from middle school to the high school to ensure vertical alignment of the curriculum. With the exception of the 9th grade team which serves students at risk, however, most teachers do not have regularly scheduled time for collaboration. Despite lack of this time, many teachers meet informally to discuss teaching and to share resources. The work of the teachers to collaborate and be reflective practitioners on their own time helps ensure that their instructional practice is responsive to student needs. The lack of dedicated time for reflection and professional discourse, the absence of a media specialist who could provide a central professional library for all staff members, and the use of non-teaching substitutes to supervise multiple classes impedes the use of appropriate instructional practices and hinders students' ability to effectively master the school's learning expectations. (teachers, self-study, district administrators, curriculum coordinators, school committee members, Endicott Survey)

Commendations

1. The district's on-site college and masters level courses and programs to improve professional capacity
2. The district's formal mentoring and induction program and the use of self-reflection portfolios as part of the teacher evaluation process
3. The variety of programs for struggling or at risk students, such as a student-initiated tutoring club, the Fruition Scholars, Step Up to Excellence, Stoughton Academy, and Alternative Education
4. The efforts by teachers to engage in informal collaboration on their own time
5. The efforts by some teachers to integrate technology and personalize instruction for their students

Recommendations

1. Collaboratively develop and individually implement formative assessments on a frequent basis in order to adjust instruction on a timely basis
2. Ensure that teaching and learning occur when teachers are absent
3. Increase timely input and feedback from students and parents to improve instructional practices
4. Provide professional development on best practices and differentiated instruction
5. Provide more opportunities for formal cross-curricular collaboration
6. Provide more frequent and specific opportunities for students to engage in cross-disciplinary learning, inquiry, higher order thinking, self-assessment and reflection, authentic tasks, and self-directed and active learning
7. Provide greater access to computer labs during and after school hours

4 Assessment of and for Student Learning

Assessment informs students and stakeholders of progress and growth toward meeting the school's 21st century learning expectations. Assessment results are shared and discussed on a regular basis to improve student learning. Assessment results inform teachers about student achievement in order to adjust curriculum and instruction.

1. The professional staff continuously employs a formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

2. The school's professional staff communicates:
   - individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to students and their families
   - the school's progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to the school community.

3. Professional staff collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement.

4. Prior to each unit of study, teachers communicate to students the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed.

5. Prior to summative assessments, teachers provide students with the corresponding rubrics.

6. In each unit of study, teachers employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments.

7. Teachers collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments.

8. Teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work.

9. Teachers regularly use formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning.

10. Teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice, including all of the following:
    - student work
    - common course and common grade-level assessments
    - individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
    - standardized assessments
    - data from sending schools, receiving schools, and post-secondary institutions
    - survey data from current students and alumni.

11. Grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning.

CONCLUSIONS

The professional staff does not continuously 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. The school recently developed school-wide analytic rubrics that are based on 21st century learning expectations. Teachers are aware of school-wide rubrics but state that they have not been trained to use them to assess whole school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. Teachers also report that the use of school-wide rubrics varies from department to department and teacher to teacher. Seventy-five percent of faculty members report using the school-wide rubrics zero times per month, but 37% state that, in their classrooms, individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations is assessed using the school-wide rubrics once or twice each month. While more than 50% of the staff report using the school-wide rubrics to assess individual student progress, there is little consistency in how they are used across classes or how they are incorporated into student grades. Students report that they are unaware of how their progress in achieving the 21st century learning expectations is measured, and many students reported never using rubrics in their classes. As a result, teachers are not able to gather important information from school-wide rubrics to inform their instruction. There is no formal school-wide process to assess whole-school and individual student progress, limiting the students' progress and growth toward meeting the school's 21st century learning expectations. (teachers, students, self-study)

The school's professional staff communicates neither individual student progress nor the school's progress in achieving the schools 21st century learning expectations to students and their families. Academic achievement is monitored and reported to parents with quarterly report cards. Progress report warning notices are issued only for students with a grade of D or lower in a given course. Parents do have expressed concern that their child could drop from an A to a C without their knowledge. Students do have the option of utilizing a weekly progress report through the guidance department, either by their own choice, with the recommendation of a faculty member, or through a parent request. With the recent purchase of a new student information system, Stoughton High School hopes to inform students and parents about student academic progress through the parent portal. While academic achievement can be reported by these means, there is no formal process for reporting individual or school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to parents and students. A few teachers report communicating student progress directly to their students, but this information is not sent to parents. In order to inform the community about school-wide progress, the principal issues a yearly written report that describes progress with regard to MCAS results, the number of students participating in AP courses, the number of students taking the SATs, the number of students continuing their education after graduation, the percentage of students graduating from Stoughton High School with a high school diploma, drop-out rates, and other statistics. Additionally, the school's leadership team highlights staff accomplishments and educational highlights in a town report published each year. None of these reports, however, communicates a student's or the school's progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. As a result, students and parents are not provided with adequate feedback regarding individual student progress, and the community at large receives no communication regarding the school's progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. (teachers, students, parents, self-study)

The professional staff collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data for a variety of subgroups to ascertain and respond to inequities in student achievement. The MCAS scores are broken down yearly into eight categories to help teachers determine which students may need additional support. Through the review of this data, the professional staff has noted that students in the substantially separate special education programs struggled to pass the MCAS biology exam. They then created a new biology section that is

co-taught by a science and special education teacher. In the first year with this section in place, thirteen of the eighteen students in the class passed the MCAS exam. The number of students enrolled in AP courses decreased dramatically a few years ago when a former assistant superintendent expanded the enrollment prerequisites in order to increase the AP scores. In an attempt to reverse this downward participation trend, Stoughton High School now participates in the Massachusetts Math and Science Initiative (MMSI) program, which is designed to increase participation and success in AP courses among underrepresented populations. Using funds from a Cultural Competency Grant, staff members determined that certain minority groups at Stoughton High School have the impression that they are ill-suited for placement in honors level or AP courses, sometimes from self-imposed restrictions or pre-conceived societal expectations. To remedy this problem, the school started Fruition Scholars, a tutoring club geared toward minority students. AP and honors minority students from the 11th and 12th grades serve as mentors for minority students in the 9th and 10th grades, showing the underclassmen that students from all backgrounds can successfully participate in higher level courses. While most departments have common assessments, and some departments complete an item analysis of student performance to inform their instruction, this data is not disaggregated by subgroups. Data from the use of school-wide rubrics is not used to determine student and school-wide success on the school's learning expectations. While some programs, grants, and initiatives are in place to address inequities in student achievement, teachers report that they are not provided time to meet formally to collect, disaggregate, and analyze data. This lack of collaboration hinders the school's ability to identify and address inequities in student achievement. (teachers, school leadership, central office personnel, self-study)

Prior to each unit of study, most teachers do not communicate to students the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations and unit-specific learning goals. While 44% of teachers report communicating the expectations and goals prior to each unit of study, a majority of teachers, students, and school leadership personnel report that most teachers do not communicate these expectations. Thus, most students are not informed of unit specific goals and 21st century learning expectations prior to each unit of study. (teachers, school leadership, central office personnel, self-study, students)

Prior to summative assessments, a majority of science and English teachers, and some teachers from other departments, provide students with the corresponding rubrics for assignments. Many teachers also provide students with exemplars when discussing summative assessments. While many teachers report using course-specific rubrics, they indicate that these are primarily used for end-of-unit assignments and for major projects. Teachers report that they do not use summative rubrics routinely. Additionally, many teachers report using scoring rubrics rather than analytical rubrics. Students say that rubrics are primarily used at the end of the term to assess major culminating assignments. Of the school-wide rubrics, those for communication, writing, and the use of technology are observed in use the most often, but they are frequently given to the students when assignments are handed back to show students how an assignment has been graded rather than at the start of the assignment. The use of rubrics for summative assessments is inconsistent, however, and rubrics are often used for grading purposes instead of for student self-assessment and reflection, limiting the students' ability to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (teachers, students, classroom observations)

In each unit of study, teachers in most departments employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments. Teachers use a variety of assessments including dipsticking, lab reports, short-term and long-term projects, reading assignments, presentations, hands-on activities, reflections, cooperative learning, skits, language diaries, partner maps, study guides, discussions, performance, art displays, writing assignments, tests, quizzes, and mid-year and final exams. These assessments provide a variety of methods in which students can demonstrate mastery. Observations, student work, and teacher reports show that these assessments effectively and purposefully measure the

academic skills presented in the school-wide rubrics, even though the actual school-wide rubrics are inconsistently utilized. (teachers, students, student shadowing, student work, department leaders, classroom observations)

Most teachers do not collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments at Stoughton High School. Teachers assigned to the freshman team and American Studies program have regularly scheduled common planning time, but the majority of teachers does not have this time allotted for collaboration. Teachers and department leaders report that a lack of formal planning time to prepare, analyze, and revise lessons and assessments is a weakness. Despite having a daily planning period, 81% of teachers report that they do not have adequate time during the school day to prepare their lessons and assessments, and 40% of teachers report a severe lack of planning time. A recent change in the school day schedule reduced the total amount of planning time for each teacher while it increased the number of classes assigned to teachers. While most required courses have a department-wide common assessment for mid-year and final exams, and many of these courses also have common assessments for each unit, 56% of teachers report spending more than an hour per month to ensure they have common assessments that reflect best practices. Many teachers spend time before school, after school, during lunch, or on weekends working with other teachers to ensure that common courses are consistently taught and assessed. The lack of formal time to collaborate regularly on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments, hinders teachers' ability to reflect on the effectiveness of instructional practices. (teachers, student shadowing, department leaders, school leadership, classroom observations)

Stoughton High School teachers are inconsistent in the way they provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure that students effectively revise and improve their work. While the majority of teachers report giving students corrective feedback, few give feedback during an assignment or unit. Most feedback was given at the end of a unit through the final unit assessment or activity. Teachers also do not have a clear and consistent understanding of the differences between formative and summative assessments. Teachers gave students feedback by annotating the scores from an assignment on a rubric, giving focus correction areas and written comments on a writing assignment, making test corrections, and providing verbal evaluations. While there is evidence that corrective feedback is provided, few teachers allow students to revise and resubmit work for credit. Some teachers give students the opportunity to rewrite assignments, but there is no departmental or school policy in place encouraging this. It is difficult to measure if students are mastering the desired learning expectations during the formative stages of the learning process if students are not afforded sufficient opportunity to use feedback to improve their work prior to the summative assessment. (teachers, observations, department leaders, school leadership)

While many teachers at Stoughton High School use formative assessments to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning, many teachers demonstrate confusion in identifying the difference between formative and summative assessments. The professional staff reports using quizzes, tests, writing assignments, presentations, and projects as formative assessments. Meetings with teachers reveal that formative assessments such as "dip-sticking", whole-class questioning, pre-quizzes, and pre-tests are often used by many teachers to gather feedback from students to inform instruction. Most teachers report that they regularly adjust daily instruction and review previous concepts that are misunderstood, but some teachers report that they primarily use summative assessments to inform and adapt instruction for the purpose of student learning. Teachers use the results of student achievement on writing assignments, presentations, midterms, and finals to review and revise their curriculum, but this is done at the end of a unit or the end of the school year, preventing the

students involved in the assessment from benefiting from any adjustments to the curricula. There is confusion among teachers regarding the language used to describe assessment practices and confusion on when and how to use assessment to inform and adapt their instruction. This confusion reduces the capability of teachers to consistently provide informed and adapted instruction for the purpose of improving student learning. (teachers, department leaders, self-study)

While the steering committee meets regularly to review data on student learning, there is no formal time allotted for teachers to individually and collectively examine student work, common course and common grade-level assessments, individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations, standardized assessments, data from sending and receiving schools, data from post-secondary institutions, and survey data from current students and alumni for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice. Departments often use their meeting time to review the results of common assessments, and teachers meet with their peers on their own to review the results of other assignments. They use these results to standardize, revise, and improve their instructional practice. The steering committee, comprised of administrators and directors, meets regularly to discuss, review, and implement changes in curriculum. They review MCAS and placement test results and have made changes to course content and the number of course levels. The steering committee also recommends how additional time and funds should be allotted to revise and improve the curriculum and assessments. Not all teachers are able to provide input for this process, however, nor are all subject areas represented. Since assessment of student performance in achieving the 21st century learning expectations does not take place in a uniform and standardized manner at Stoughton High School, teachers and administrators cannot examine individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. Most teachers report that these learning expectations are implicitly imbedded in their lesson and unit objectives, but they are not usually explicitly stated verbally or in writing to the students. The school collects and examines data from sending schools, receiving schools, and post-secondary institutions, as well as survey data from current students and alumni for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practices. In response to this data, the school now offers extended science laboratory time and is adding six new courses in the 2011-1012 school year: Sculpture, Advanced Digital Editing, Mandarin Chinese II, Green Technology, Immigrant Experience, and a credit recovery program. Without formal time allotted for teachers to individually and collectively examine evidence of student learning, teachers are less able to revise their curriculum and improve their instructional practice. (teachers, observations, department leaders, classroom observations)

Grading and reporting practices at Stoughton High School are not regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. The school has a policy regarding the weighting and distribution of grades, but there is no formal plan in place to ensure that the grading and reporting practices are aligned with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. Teachers indicate that, since the learning expectations are embedded in their courses, the reporting of student achievement of the school's core values and beliefs is implicit in the students' report card grades. Teachers report it has been three to four years since they have met formally to evaluate and revise their grading and reporting practices, curricula, and common assessments. The lack of a formal and regular review process hinders the professional staff in its attempt to revise grading and reporting practices that maintain an alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. (teachers, department leaders, school handbooks and publications, central office administrators)

Commendations

1. The use of common mid-year and final exams
2. The item analysis of the results of the common assessments by some departments to inform teachers about student achievement in order to adjust their curriculum and instruction
3. The analysis of standardized test data to make improvements and adjustments in the school curricula

Recommendations

1. Develop and continuously employ a formal process, based on the use of the school-wide rubrics, to assess individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
2. Develop and utilize a process to communicate individual student and school-wide progress in achieving the schools 21st century learning expectations to students and their families
3. Allocate time for professional staff members to meet formally to collect, disaggregate, and analyze data to allow the school to respond to inequities in student achievement
4. Ensure that prior to each unit of study, teachers communicate to students the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations, unit-specific learning goals, and school-wide rubrics
5. Ensure that teachers provide students with the corresponding rubrics for assignments prior to summative assessments
6. Provide professional development time to train faulty members on assessment vocabulary and practices
7. Schedule time for teachers to collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments and analytic rubrics
8. Provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students effectively revise and improve their work
9. Regularly review and revise grading and reporting practices to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES, INC.
COMMISSIONS ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

SUPPORT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

School Culture and Leadership

School Resources for Learning

Community Resources for Learning

5 School Culture and Leadership

The school culture is equitable and inclusive, and it embodies the school's foundational core values and beliefs about student learning. It is characterized by reflective, collaborative, and constructive dialogue about research-based practices that support high expectations for the learning of all students. The leadership of the school fosters a safe, positive culture by promoting learning, cultivating shared leadership, and engaging all members of the school community in efforts to improve teaching and learning.

1. The school community consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all.

2. The school is equitable, inclusive, and fosters heterogeneity where every student over the course of the high school experience is enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core course (English/language arts, social studies, math, science, or world languages).

3. There is a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

4. In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff:
   - engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning
   - use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices
   - dedicate formal time to implement professional development
   - apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

5. School leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning.

6. The organization of time supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students.

7. Student load and class size enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students.

8. The principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations.

9. Teachers, students, and parents are involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership.

10. Teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning.

11. The school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

12. The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school.

CONCLUSIONS

Stoughton High School 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. Students are polite and respectful to their teachers. The safe and supportive culture is exemplified by the Stoughton High School Student/Parent Handbook which is revised every year. The expectations and repercussions for student behavior at Stoughton High School are clearly defined in the handbook. Every student is provided with a student/parent handbook, and every staff member is provided with both a student/parent handbook and a faculty manual. The faculty manual is developed through input from the faculty council and administrators. The Endicott Survey results reported in the self-study indicate that 73% of Stoughton High School students feel safe, and 84% of staff members as well as 73% of parents feel that the school culture is safe and positive. The presence of hall monitors in the school may contribute to the safe environment. In addition, Stoughton High School offers more than 30 co-curricular opportunities for students of diverse interests. A spring 2010 survey of all students in their English class showed that 70% of the high school population participates in at least one co-curricular activity. The attendance policy was amended for the 2009-2010 school year to encourage more student responsibility. Students must arrive at the start of the first period and remain present for the entire day to participate in any co-curricular activity. Students who participate in co-curricular activities are held to high academic and attendance standards, fostering responsibility for learning. By providing a safe, positive, respectful and supportive culture, Stoughton High School promotes student learning. (self-study, classroom observations, students, Endicott Survey)

Stoughton High School strives to be equitable and inclusive and has taken steps to foster a system of heterogeneity where, over the course of four years of high school, every student is enrolled in heterogeneous classes in each curriculum area, but the school has not yet fully achieved this goal. Stoughton High School is making an effort to provide fair and equitable opportunities for students to achieve their own personal level of success within a heterogeneous community. Initiatives have been made to move toward more heterogeneous grouping by eliminating and combining certain courses. The English department eliminated its lowest level classes for 9th graders and integrated these students into the college prep level. Similarly, the mathematics department reviewed offerings for 9th graders and eliminated the individualized math program (IMP), replacing it with a modified Algebra 1 course. As a result, the school's racial and ethnic diversity is more evident throughout all classrooms of Stoughton High School. In spring 2010, the self-study committee evaluated the ethnic/racial backgrounds of four random college preparatory classes and compared the data to four random AP and honors classes. The data revealed that the college preparatory classes are more diverse than the AP and honors courses sampled, but there is a minority representation within the AP and honors population. In order to encourage increased minority student participation in AP and honors courses, Stoughton High School actively participates in the MMSI grant and the Fruition Scholars program to encourage increased minority enrollment in AP and honors courses. While some freshman students are assigned to the freshman team, the team concept was developed to help students who are at risk of failing and dropping out, not to develop heterogeneous classes. While general and elective classes are available in every core content area, most required courses are still grouped, however, limiting the complete equity of enrollment for every student in at least one heterogeneous class in each curriculum area. (self-study, classroom observation, teachers, student shadowing).

Although Stoughton High School has explored and discussed the implementation of advisories through research, site visits, and staff surveys, the school currently does not have a formal, on-going program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. The

school plans to implement an advisory program in 2011. Currently, Stoughton High School has class advisors at three grade levels who act as a link between the students and the faculty. These advisors are accessible to students throughout their four years of high school. A team concept model continues to provide support for selected 9th graders in the transition from middle school to high school. Ninth grade team teachers meet collaboratively once per cycle. The building based support team (BBST) offers additional support services for non-special education students. A variety of sports programs and after school clubs is offered in the school. Each club is facilitated by a staff member, but recent budget cuts and contract negotiations have negatively impacted co-curricular offerings. In addition to the after school offerings, there are several programs during regular school hours to assist students with academic, civic, and social skills, including the SHS Regular Education Academic Lab (REAL), peer mediation, therapeutic and social skills groups, and work study. Although some students have reported having an adult in the building whom they can turn to without the full implementation of the advisory program, there is no formal process in place to ensure that every student has an adult in the school who knows the student well and is able to assist the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, students, school leadership)

In order to improve student learning through the teachers' professional development, the principal and professional staff endeavor to engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning; they use resources outside of the school to maintain currency and best practices; they dedicate formal time to implement professional development; and they apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction and assessment. The professional development for Stoughton High School has been adequate and stable for the last four years. In addition, there is sufficient formal time for professional development through full day, late arrival, and early release days. The focus of these days, however, is not clearly driven by the schools' core values and beliefs. There is a well-structured two-year mentoring program for new faculty members. There are opportunities for faculty members to engage in formal professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching through observations, peer observations, and pre- and post-observation conferences, and they confer informally at lunches and in passing. However, most teachers report meeting infrequently within and across disciplines. District initiatives and state mandated training generate workshop topics, such as SMARTBoard training and integration, common assessments, use of rubrics, the John Collins Writing Program, math curriculum review, the state curriculum frameworks, and differentiated instruction. Information gained in workshops is posted in the department folders on First Class for sharing with colleagues. Outside resources are utilized to maintain currency with best practices such as Massachusetts Association of Science Teachers, American Choral Directors Association Eastern and National Conferences, MSSI conferences, common core workshops, and Helping Students with Disabilities workshops. Department directors also have access to journals and articles that they share with their departments. The monthly after-school faculty meetings are also sometimes dedicated to implementing professional development on topics that are often based on teacher requests. Teachers apply the skills and practices gained to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment as evidenced in the use of the Collins Writing Program, the utilization of SMARTBoards, MCAS assessment data, and inquiry-based science instruction. In the past, teachers also used professional development time at the end of each semester and school year to reflect on and analyze student work. While formal time has been dedicated to professional development for faculty members, little time is provided for teacher collaboration within and across disciplines for the purpose of improving curriculum, instruction, and assessment. (self-study, department leadership, central office personnel)

Stoughton High School educational leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on student learning. Stoughton High School administrators are all trained through

the Research for Better Teaching (RBT) program. Directors and administrators must be state certified, or in the process of certification, and have coursework that includes Observing and Analyzing Teaching I and the Skillful Teacher I and II prior to being allowed to conduct observations. Administrators and directors complete professional teacher evaluations in a two-year cycle. Two summative evaluations are done year one, followed by a self-evaluation in year two. Directors, being members of the same bargaining units as teachers, conduct peer-like evaluations, but only the principal and assistant principal can create the final assessment document. Informal observations are done by way of 'walk-throughs' by directors, the principal, and assistant principals. Non-professional status teachers are evaluated yearly for the first three years. Because school leaders at Stoughton High School regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision throughout the annual faculty evaluation process, faculty members receive timely feedback to improve student learning. (teachers, department leaders, school leadership)

The organization of time at Stoughton High School does not fully support research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students. A rotating schedule has been replaced with one that offers non-rotating long blocks intended to facilitate science labs and the work study program. While the scheduling of these classes and programs has improved, the non-rotation of classes has highlighted issues with chronic tardiness at the start of school and behavior issues at the end of the day. Some faculty members feel that this change to the schedule adversely impacts some students' ability to learn, harming some students in order to benefit others. Student and faculty opinions are divided on the new schedule, and there is no formal mechanism is in place for stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of the new schedule on teaching and learning. Teachers are also concerned about the lack of time built into the school day for their collaboration. For the 2009-2010 school year, seven scheduled department meetings were primarily allocated to NEASC preparation, and an additional professional development day was scheduled and used for the same purpose. Over the last few years, little time has been provided for teachers to review student work collaboratively. First Class provides opportunities for faculty members to share lessons and collaborate electronically so departments can share various lesson plans and comments without meeting, but teachers prefer to meet and have active discussions. Students have opportunities for learning outside and beyond the class environment by participating in after school programs such as the Science Olympiad and the Construction Challenge. In addition Stoughton High School provides career pathway opportunities such as work study, marketing (DECA), accounting, television production, photography, and graphic arts. While the change to the schedule was made to better support the learning needs of students, the current organization of time does not fully support the constructive dialogue on research-based practices and the professional collaboration among teachers needed to support high expectations for the learning of all students. (students, teachers, classroom observations, publications and other documents)

Student load and class size enable teachers to meet the learning needs of all individual students. Based on data from the 2009-2010 academic year, the average class size in each department at Stoughton High School was between 17 and 23 students. This was calculated by dividing all the students by the total number of sections. Many of the AP and honors level classes, however, have a population of 19 or less while most of the college and college prep classes have between 20 and 26 students. In the Endicott Survey, 55.4% of students state that their classes are a reasonable size, 47.9 % of parents believe that the size of their child's class allows the teachers to meet the learning needs of their children, and 45.1 % of faculty members believe that their student load enables them to meet individualized instruction requirements. Reviewing class sizes for the 2010-2011 academic year shows that class sizes average between 14 and 18 students in the core classes of English, math, science, social studies, and world languages. With the current student load and class size, teachers at Stoughton High School should be able to meet the needs of individual students. (student shadowing, facility tour, self-study, Endicott Survey, handbooks, publications and other documents)

Working with other building leaders, the principal provides instructional leadership that is mostly rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. In light of the resignation of one assistant principal in June of 2010, the principal in August of 2010, and the retirement of the other assistant principal in April of 2011, it is difficult to measure the impact of the new principal and assistant principals in the active implementation of the core values. Students, parents, and faculty members alike have high regard for the new administrators and believe that the right tone is being set by the new principal. The faculty cites the consistently warm and respectful manner in which he addresses the faculty in "Dearest Faculty" emails as well as his opening day remarks articulating that his vision is to provide the "freedom for students to explore their fullest potential". Students are impressed that he already knows many of them by name, and parents are delighted that he is approachable and maintains an open door. The school's core values clearly influenced the principal's elimination of the 'standard' level in the English department. This reduction, begun by the previous administration, was carried through by the current principal. The move has provided many students with the opportunity to achieve higher expectations. Recent budget cuts, however, have reduced building leadership positions, eliminating and combining director positions for some departments. Some department directors feel they are spread too thin to properly supervise their curricula and personnel. As a result, the principal's ability to provide instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations may be hindered. (student shadowing, facility tour, self-study, Endicott Survey, handbooks, publications and other documents, school leadership)

Teachers, students, and parents at Stoughton High School are somewhat involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership. Parents, teachers, and students consistently report that community involvement at Stoughton High School is very strong. When asked what formal paths are in place for proposing change or voicing dissent, however, the groups list the school council as the only one they are aware of in which they can participate. While teachers report that one parent participated on each NEASC self-study committee, parents voice frustration with what they feel to be insufficient communication between the school and parents, causing one parent to say that current policy promotes a feeling of isolation for parents. When parents were asked if they would be attending parent-teacher conferences the next day during a parent meeting with the visiting team, only one parent was aware that these conferences were being held. Parents are eager to be involved but do not have information on where or how to do so. Teachers and students have both commented on feeling somewhat powerless about the decisions made regarding the newly implemented bell schedule. Forms entitled "Administrative Feedback Forms" are in place for teachers to share suggestions, explain problems, or give feedback, but few of the teachers knew of their existence. Everyone consulted - parents, teachers, and students - overwhelmingly note that the current principal is extremely approachable and maintains an open door policy. They all feel they have complete and unfiltered access to the principal. The lack of opportunities for involvement in meaningful and defined roles in the formal decision-making process, however, limits the promotion of responsibility and ownership for parents, students, and teachers at Stoughton High School. (student shadowing, self-study, publications and other documents, parents, teachers, students)

Many teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. Students at Stoughton High School speak positively about the number of "extras" their teachers provide for them both in and out of the classroom. Teachers are required to stay an extra 90 minutes after school every week to provide students with additional academic support, but many exceed this time. Teachers create new courses such as Robotics and oversee food drives, drama productions, and Destination Imagination teams to support student participation. As a result of the initiative and leadership of many teachers, students' engagement in

learning is enhanced. (student shadowing, self-study, publications and other documents, parents, teachers, students)

The school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving 21st century learning expectations. They work well together, understand and respect the role each plays in the Stoughton School District, and are supportive of each other. The new principal describes his relationship with the school committee and superintendent as "open, respectful, and inclusive". He is involved in the present feasibility study and master planning regarding the facilities. The school board has supported installing interactive white boards in almost all the high school classrooms, equipping engineering, robotics, and computer labs, and updating music and art studios to support student learning. As a result of the collaborative relationship between the school board, superintendent, and principal, they can work in a constructive atmosphere to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (student shadowing, self-study, publications and other documents, parents, teachers, students)

The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school. Since the job description for principal of Stoughton High School states in its job goals that the individual is to "develop, implement, supervise, and evaluate the total learning experience for high school students and provide educational leadership to the staff, parents, and students, assuming full responsibility for all aspects of the school program", the principal believes that he has sufficient decision-making authority to fully accomplish the goal. The principal supports teaching and learning needs through the regular teacher assessment program. The principal has the required decision-making authority to provide sufficient leadership for Stoughton High School. (self-study, publications and other documents, teachers, school leadership)

Commendations

1. The significant effort made to standardize the supervision and evaluation process to improve student outcomes
2. The adoption of First Class to aid in keeping faculty and students connected and informed
3. The favorable class sizes and teacher load
4. The efforts of the principal to make teachers and students feel valued and respected
5. The ability of the principal to connect and be available to all constituencies
6. The safe, respectful, and supportive school culture
7. The formal time allotted for professional development
8. The collaborative relationship between the principal, superintendent, and school board

Recommendations

1. Provide adequate staffing to supervise curriculum development and revision
2. Provide a formal mechanism that allows for input and transparency in the decision-making process by all constituencies
3. Develop and implement a plan to establish a consistent and reliable communication link with parents, students, and teachers
4. Develop and implement a formal and inclusive process to review and evaluate the bell schedule to ensure it supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students

5. Provide a formal, on-going program through which each student has an adult in the school, in additional to the guidance counselor, who knows the student well and is able to assist the student in achieving the school 21st century expectations
6. Develop and implement a plan to foster heterogeneity where every student, over the course of the high school experience, is enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core course

6 School Resources for Learning

Student learning and well-being are dependent upon adequate and appropriate support. The school is responsible for providing an effective range of coordinated programs and services. These resources enhance and improve student learning and well-being and support the school's core values and beliefs. Student support services enable each student to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

1. The school has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, that support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

2. The school provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services.

3. Support services staff use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student.

4. School counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
   - deliver a written, developmental program
   - meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling
   - engage in individual and group meetings with all students
   - deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers
   - use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

5. The school's health services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
   - provide preventative health services and direct intervention services
   - use an appropriate referral process
   - conduct ongoing student health assessments
   - use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

6. Library/media services are integrated into curriculum and instructional practices and have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
   - are actively engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum
   - provide a wide range of materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum
   - ensure that the facility is available and staffed for students and teachers before, during, and after school
   - are responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning
   - conduct ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

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

   ▪ collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations
   ▪ provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students
   ▪ perform ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

CONCLUSIONS

Stoughton High School has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, which support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Teachers, guidance counselors, school adjustment counselors, and administrators refer students at risk to the building-based support team (BBST). Teachers, administrators, guidance personnel, and the nurse are involved in the BBST and meet with students to discuss academic, disciplinary, and social and emotional issues that may be causing them to disconnect from the school community. Together the team looks at student report cards, attendance, schedules, discipline records, and cumulative folders to determine the best solution for each student. Once a student's needs have been determined, the student's schedule or program is changed if necessary in order to meet the needs of the student. At the beginning of each course, students have two full cycles, or 12 school days, to determine if they are able to handle the class requirements for full year classes. Up to this point, students are able to change their classes to meet their individual needs. This opportunity is available at the start of both the first and second semester. Students may be referred to the Stoughton Youth Commission, the Regular Education Academic Lab (REAL), the ESL/ELL program, the alternative education program, or Stoughton Academy as needed. Students with individualized education programs (IEPs) are monitored within the special education department. Its programs include the life skills programs for students with severe special needs, the emotional support program for students who are emotionally fragile or have behavior plans, and the therapeutic learning center for students on the autism spectrum. The use of these interventions and programs has resulted in a drop-out rate for 2009-2010 of only 3%, which is lower than the state average. As a result of the successful implementations of these programs for identified students, the majority of Stoughton High School students has the opportunity to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations and will successfully complete their high school education. (department leaders, program guides, teachers, student shadowing)

Stoughton High School provides limited information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services. Families are not provided annual information about the school's support services. The guidance department, however, creates a junior year information packet mailing that includes information about the college application process. Information about standardized testing, guidance services, adjustment counseling, and the state-mandated procedural safeguards are found on the school website and in the guidance blog and aired on the three local cable stations. The website provides limited information on the student support services that are available. Parents receive a report card every quarter on their child's progress, but they are notified mid-quarter only if their child has a D or F. Parents have the opportunity to email teachers regarding their child's progress, and teacher email addresses are currently located on the school's website. Teachers are then able to refer a student to an SHS Regular Education Academic Lab (REAL) for extra support in their courses. Although there is no formal plan yet in place, it is expected that parents will be able to access their child's grades on a Power School parent portal next year. Each student is provided with a secure First Class email account when they enter the school. Teachers use this system to inform students of class work and assignments. Teachers also use this vehicle to communicate with students who may be in need of information or help, and translation services are provided for families who need them. As a result of the limited information to families about available student support services, however, students and families say they are not fully aware of the available resources to ensure student academic, civic and social success. (teachers, self-study, central office administrators, student shadowing)

Support services staff members at Stoughton High School use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student. Multiple media are used to disseminate information for the

coordinated services to students including print materials, mass mailings, the school website, a guidance blog, email, Knightline (the student news broadcast), and a telephone messaging system. Parents and students are contacted by email or telephone by their guidance counselor regarding their academic performance. Support services staff members communicate by phone, email, or personal conversations to provide coordinated services for each student. By utilizing technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student, the support services staff members help to enhance and improve student learning, enabling each student to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (school support staff, self-study, facility tour)

Stoughton High School counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who deliver a written, developmental program; meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling; engage in individual and group meetings with all students; deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers; and use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. The guidance department has an adequate number of certified personnel that meet with their students a minimum of two times per year to develop student schedules and create post-graduate plans. There are four programs of study: advanced placement, honors, college, and college preparatory. The guidance department has written curriculum that is followed in order to meet state mandates, but its members do not have a common form that is used when documenting student meetings. Students either seek out their guidance counselor by making an appointment or are called out of class to review course selection, receive personal counseling, and discuss post high school planning. These meetings are individual or in small or large groups depending on the guidance counselor's timeframe and goals. The adjustment counselors and guidance staff members refer students in need of mental health and social services to local and state providers. These include the Massachusetts Departments of Child and Families, Youth Services, Health, and Developmental Services, and the Norfolk County District Attorney's Office. Students' schedules are created based on Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) test scores, course grades, and teacher recommendations. Students' individual strengths are highlighted through their course offerings. Students who partake in athletics need to have at least 22 credits to participate in athletic programs. Guidance counselors also work with coaches and athletes to ensure they are not failing more than two classes. The guidance office uses feedback from pre- and post-meeting surveys and senior exit surveys to evaluate their program, but this feedback is generally limited only to students. The guidance office space is unavailable during inclement weather because of leaks and flooding which frequently hinder the efforts of guidance counselors to deliver services. The comprehensive services provided to students by the guidance department enable students to successfully meet the school's 21st century learning expectations, but the limited dissemination of information about services and collection of feedback from parents and the community hinders this achievement, and the facility does not support the regular and effective delivery of services. (guidance curriculum, teachers, department leaders, self-study, parents, students, handbook of athletic standards)

Stoughton High School's health services staff has an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who provide preventative health services and direct intervention services; use an appropriate referral process; conduct ongoing student health assessments; and use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. Stoughton High School has one full-time nurse who is available to the students, and the director of nursing for the school district is stationed in the high school and may be available for assistance. The physical space of the nurse's office is minimally adequate. The school's health services provide preventative health services and direct intervention services, such as smoking cessations workshops, Mommy and Me classes, and a "Looking

Good, Feeling Good" healthy weight program. The health services staff uses an appropriate referral process for health concerns that exceed the school's reach. The director of nursing and the school nurse regularly contact physicians willing to see students on short notice, and they refer to mental health providers as necessary. They participate in several outside partnerships to benefit students, such as an orthopedic partnership with the athletic trainer. Another partnership is the community-based drug prevention coalition named Organizing Against Substances in Stoughton (OASIS). The health services staff also routinely partners with University of Massachusetts' Medical School departments. The director is actively involved in a Health Wellness Center that plans to open this spring at a downtown location. The health services staff conducts ongoing student health assessments, including scoliosis screening, hearing and vision testing, and height, weight, and body mass index. The health services staff uses ongoing, relevant assessment data to improve services. Its members receive feedback from the school community through an OASIS survey every other year and an MDPH survey every three years. The health services staff has made changes to its programming based upon a parental satisfaction with health services survey results. The health services staff provides consistent and focused attention to the continued health and well-being of all students, helping to ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. (school support staff, self-study, facility tour)

Library/media services at Stoughton High School are not integrated into curriculum and instructional practices and do not have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who are actively engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum; they do not provide a wide range of materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum; they do not ensure that the facility is available and staffed for students and teachers before, during, and after school; they are not responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning; and they do not conduct ongoing assessment, using relevant data including feedback from the school community to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. The library aide is not actively engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum other than to gather resources for teachers who request this service for their classes using the library. The library/media specialist position was eliminated for budget reasons in 2009. One full-time library aide manages all library responsibilities. In addition to normal library duties, the aide laminates all school materials and makes copies for teachers as requested. Occasionally, the aide functions as a substitute teacher for displaced students being housed in the library. The aide is assisted by selected students who help shelve books and who are provided with basic training in library skills. Although there are informal orientations held for freshmen, there is no written library. In the collection, there is a dearth of print materials, and many existing materials are outdated. The collection does have titles that support diverse cultural views and perspectives, however. There is one database for student access called JStor. This data base, however, is provided through the English department not the library. If necessary, the aide completes interlibrary loans from the elementary or middle school libraries to provide a book for students or staff members. The library aide solicits the assistance of staff members to obtain used periodicals for the students to use. There are limited CDs and DVDs which cannot circulate outside of the building. There is one SMARTBoard installed in the library, and there are ten desktop computers for student use. The collection is automated, but there has been a limited budget to support the purchase of new materials for the past two years. The library is available only on a limited basis for students and staff during the day as it is closed after school, although the aide occasionally keeps it open during early release days for student use. There are no formal means to solicit feedback to improve the library. The library aide creates a list of books she would like to purchase, but this list is generated informally. Teachers may email or have a personal conversation to suggest a book they would like the aide to purchase to support their curriculum. As a result of the many serious library deficits, there are significant negative impacts on the school ranging from the absence of a credentialed library professional to the frequent closure of the library during and after the regular school day. The lack of

funding also negatively impacts the school's ability to provide current media and library resources. As a result, the lack of appropriate library media services hinders all students' ability to achieve the 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, parents, school support staff)

Support services at Stoughton High School for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners, have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations; provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students; and perform ongoing assessment, using relevant data including feedback from the school community to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. Stoughton High School has nine special education liaisons, two adjustment counselors, and one English language learner certified staff member who work with approximately 170 students. Special education liaisons are responsible for collaborating with teachers and program counselors to meet the school's 21st century learning expectations. Students are able to enroll in classes from various levels in order to accentuate the student's strengths and receive support in academic labs either every day or three times during the six day cycle as specified by the IEP. Students with special needs are usually enrolled in college or college prep level courses, but they are able to be in higher level classes if appropriate. Based on review of Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) and English language learner (ELL) data, the school has created MCAS remedial classes in English language arts, math, and science to offer additional support to students needing remediation. Support services staff members use parent satisfaction surveys, Massachusetts Department of Public Health surveys, student report cards, and PSAT scores to improve services and ensure that each student has the opportunity to achieve the 21st century learning expectations. As a result, the school is able to meet the needs of the students through various course offerings and use the data collected to improve the services that are available to every student. (central office administrators, self-study, school support staff)

Commendations

1. The timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students
2. The guidance counselors who meet regularly with students to review course selection, provide personal counseling, and discuss post high school planning
3. Efforts by support services personnel to collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff to meet the needs of all students
4. The use of parent satisfaction surveys, Massachusetts Department of Public Health surveys, student report cards, and PSAT scores to improve services for identified students and ensure that all students have the opportunity to achieve the 21st century learning expectations

Recommendations

1. Disseminate information about all available support services to families in a frequent and consistent manner that will allow all students to achieve the 21st century learning expectations
2. Provide a full-time certified library media specialist
3. Develop and implement a written library media services curriculum to support the school's 21st century learning expectations
4. Provide funding to support a wide range of current materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum

5. Ensure that the library is available and staffed for students and teachers before, during, and after school
6. Provide a formal vehicle for ongoing assessment, using relevant data including feedback from the school community to improve library services
7. Ensure the library has an adequate number of computers are available for student use

7 Community Resources for Learning

The achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations requires active community, governing board, and parent advocacy. Through dependable and adequate funding, the community provides the personnel, resources, and facilities to support the delivery of curriculum, instruction, programs, and services.

1. The community and the district's governing body provide dependable funding for:
    - a wide range of school programs and services
    - sufficient professional and support staff
    - ongoing professional development and curriculum revision
    - a full range of technology support
    - sufficient equipment
    - sufficient instructional materials and supplies.

2. The school develops, plans, and funds programs:
    - to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant
    - to properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment
    - to keep the school clean on a daily basis.

3. The community funds and the school implements a long-range plan that addresses:
    - programs and services
    - enrollment changes and staffing needs
    - facility needs
    - technology
    - capital improvements.

4. Faculty and building administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget.

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

6. The school maintains documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations.

7. All professional staff actively engage parents and families as partners in each student's education and reach out specifically to those families who have been less connected with the school.

8. The school develops productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning.

CONCLUSIONS

The community and the district's governing body struggle to provide adequate funding for a wide range of school programs and services, for sufficient professional and support staff, for on-going professional development, and for curriculum revision. The district does not adequately support a full range of technology support, sufficient equipment, and sufficient instructional materials and supplies. Some Stoughton High School programs have been reduced by budget challenges, but most remaining programs are adequately staffed with an important exception being the library program. The position of library media specialist has been eliminated, and students are severely limited in their access to the 21st century research skills typically presented by a library media specialist. Additionally, the inadequate number of substitute teachers available for teacher absences seriously inhibits the teaching and learning process. A reduction in the number of support staff positions has contributed to uneven communication with parents as well. The dual roles of the guidance secretary as the registrar and the limited secretarial support staff during the summer months mean that the school is hindered in its ability to register and schedule new students in an effective and timely manner, often leading to a less than smooth school opening and potential damage to student learning. Teachers, however, can personalize learning for students as a result of adequate class sizes and teacher loads. Some teachers report a decrease in the budgets allocated for supplies and materials and a lack of monies for textbooks. Stoughton High School budget line items for the past three years illustrate slight increases in funds for course reimbursement, and professional development funds overall have remained stable over the past four years. For the past few years some money has been allocated for curriculum revision in many areas as well. Despite significant technology enhancements such as a SMARTBoard in almost every classroom, eleven computer labs, and a new computer on every teacher's desk, there is insufficient technology support, resulting in some repair delays. There is also no technology integrationist to work with teachers to embed technology into instruction. While the district's governing body struggles to provide dependable funding for most programs, personnel, professional development, and curriculum revision, there is a need for the community to provide adequate funding for technology support, supplies, and materials in order for students to be able to achieve the learning expectations set forward by the school community. (teachers, facility tour, community resources subcommittee, superintendent, parents)

While Stoughton High School has developed plans and programs to ensure the short and long-term maintenance and repair of the building and school plant, to properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment, and to keep the school clean on a daily basis, the plans have not been adequately funded. The district has reduced to one the number of full-time custodians assigned to the high school during the day. Three full-time maintenance personnel are responsible for the upkeep of fifteen town buildings, including eight schools. A full-time buildings and ground staff person retired and was not replaced. A ten percent "replacement and repair plan" for small capital improvement plans and equipment replacement cannot be counted on annually to provide all of the funding necessary to address all of the building and equipment problems. Some town meeting articles for capital improvement projects have been approved, but the itemized list of necessary repairs and replacements is extensive. Maintenance is now deferred for longer periods of time. The district's governing body is able to provide some funding for capital improvements and some equipment replacement, but students do not have sufficient opportunities to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations at the current funding level. (school committee members, teachers, facility tour)

The community has not adequately funded, and the school has not implemented, a long-range plan that addresses programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements. The community is currently in the second year of a five-year strategic plan. Although the strategic plan contains goals and objectives, it does not formally address programs and

services, nor does it address the funding mechanism for implementing long range plans. The strategic plan has resulted in a Facilities Master Plan for Stoughton Public Schools and, in turn, a feasibility study committee. The district has in place and is funding a technology plan. Both the strategic plan and the technology plan serve as guides in implementing policies. As a result of the creation of an educational facilities master plan, an engineering study has been funded, and Stoughton Public Schools is currently in the process of working with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) to review requirements for a facility replacement. This process will serve to inform the community and assist in formulating a long-range plan for capital improvements, specifically to address upgrades to the facility or to build a new high school. Funding has not been identified which will allow Stoughton High School to implement a specific, detailed, long-range plan to address capital improvements. A specific and detailed capital improvement plan will allow administrators to further plan for and address programs and services, enrollment needs, and staffing needs. The community has provided limited funding for specified facility upgrades. Recent funding has resulted in upgrades to air conditioning, carpet replacement, additional science rooms, and repairs to the athletic bleachers. However, capital improvements such as repair of the roof, track, and the building to address water leaks have not been funded. As a result of postponing such repairs, additional water damage has resulted, and classrooms have been converted to storage areas. While Stoughton High School has funded some repairs and replacements, the lack of a funded long range plan limits students in achieving Stoughton High School's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, school leadership, facility tour)

Faculty and building administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of Stoughton High School's budget. Working in concert with the Stoughton Public Schools Superintendent, the principal establishes a preliminary budget prior to the end of the calendar year. Through an inclusive process, department supervisors and faculty members are involved. The budget process begins early in the school year with faculty members submitting requests to their respective department supervisors. Faculty and building administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget. Department directors, who in most cases represent two curriculum areas, submit budget requests to the principal. Department directors are meaningfully involved in the ongoing budget process and may consult with faculty members to prioritize needs for materials and supplies. The principal reviews budget requests and creates his budget for Stoughton High School. Staffing decisions are made by the principal in conjunction with funding limitations. The budget may be revised based on funding limits defined by the superintendent. Once the budget is approved, department supervisors receive updated information on budget allocations. The inclusive process of developing the annual budget ensures that faculty and building administrators have the opportunity to adjust programs and services to best serve students' needs and aids in implementing the 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, teacher interviews, teacher meetings, department leaders, school leadership)

The school site and plant at Stoughton High School does not support the delivery of high-quality school programs and services. As a result of the extensive and chronic state of deterioration within parts of the building, full implementation of the educational program is not possible. All areas of the building are not handicapped accessible, so some students have restricted access to programs and services. Although science labs are adequate, adding another science room and an engineering classroom has had a negative impact on other areas. The library/media center suffers from water leaks, and damage is visible on materials, walls, and the ceiling. The guidance offices also suffer from water damage. Reoccurring leaks interfere with and interrupt services to students, conferencing with parents, and/or college information meetings. Several classrooms are undersized, and most areas of the building do not have adequate storage space. The gymnasium is not adequate to support delivery of instruction to the entire student body. MIAA tournaments cannot be held at the high school because of the limited size of the gymnasium. Outside fields and grounds are in need of repair and are not handicapped accessible. Not

all student lockers have been updated. The fourth floor of the A Building is inaccessible to handicapped or injured students, and student learning is interrupted if they are unable to access their classes on the fourth floor. The health clinic does not contain sufficient space to serve the student body of Stoughton High School. Some bathroom stalls are missing doors for privacy. Storage space throughout the building is inadequate. The regulation and control of heating and air conditioning throughout the building is uneven. Outdoor space, however, is adequate and suitable for safe and secure parking for teachers, students, and parents. The cafeteria/student dining services and the food preparation area are sufficient in size and adequately equipped. While Stoughton High School makes the most of its facilities with a dedicated staff and faculty, significant infrastructure renovations are necessary to provide a 21st century education for all students. (self-study, facility tour, school support staff)

The school maintains documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. Documents are maintained by the supervisor of support services in the district support services office. Not all areas of the building and grounds are handicapped accessible, however, and only one of three bathrooms in the health suite is handicapped accessible. There are serious concerns about evacuating students from the fourth floor of the A Building in the event of an accident or emergency. There are currently four chair lifts, but only one elevator for the entire building. Chair lifts are not available throughout the building for emergency evacuation of students. Students, parents, and faculty members report fluctuations in temperature throughout the building, but the supervisor of support services cannot maintain the climate because of the age of controls and boilers. Electrical panels need to be upgraded to replace existing fuses with circuit breakers and to address upgrades for new technology. The SHS Chemical Management Plan was updated in May 2009, the SHS Asbestos Management Plan was updated in March 2009, the SHS Lead Management Plan was updated in October 2008, and ADA policies and procedures were revised in November 2009. The SHS Integrated Pest Management Plan was updated in December 2005, but an ant infestation continues to occur in the main offices. A three-year AHERA Asbestos Re-inspection Summary Report was completed on July 16, 2009. A baseline IAQ Assessment Report was completed in June 2009. Current certificates of inspections for the elevator, fire extinguishers, air tank, hot water boilers, and steam boilers are all up to date. The facility master plan for Stoughton Public Schools has identified necessary upgrades needed at Stoughton High School. Levels of priority have been assigned, but the superintendent reports that funding for only a few projects are contained within the FY12 budget. While Stoughton High School meets the minimum applicable codes, the building is not in compliance with local fire, health, and safety codes for new construction. (classroom observations, self-study, facility tour, students, teachers, support staff)

Some professional staff members actively engage parents and families as partners in each student's education and reach out specifically to those families who have been less connected with the school. There is no written school-wide policy for all professional staff members to actively engage parents and families who are less connected with the school. Some professional staff members informally engage parents and families who have been less connected. Programs such as the BBST, comprised of a few teachers, administrators, and guidance staff members, meet to assist students who are struggling academically and/or behaviorally. The special education department also assists students with identified learning needs. Teachers, administrators, and counselors work with parents of these students to develop strategies and programs for success. Interim progress reports are sometimes issued for students. Quarterly progress reports are mailed home for those students who are in danger academically. Some teachers make personal contact with parents through telephone calls and email. The guidance department regularly emails students through the First Class system with important announcements and reminders. A truant officer, shared by Stoughton High School and O'Donnell Middle School, conducts home visits if necessary. English language learners are assisted by an ELL teacher who works directly

with students and their parents. Limited outreach efforts to engage parents and families less connected with the school results in missed opportunities to assist students in achieving the 21st century learning expectations and succeeding at Stoughton High School. (teachers, support staff, students, parents)

Stoughton High School has developed some parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships, but there are some gaps in Stoughton High School's outreach to the world outside. A dual enrollment agreement with Quincy College is in place, but some students do not know about it. There are two programs in place at Stoughton High School for teachers to take college courses on site. There are booster clubs for both performing arts and athletics, but Stoughton High School does not have an active parent/teacher organization. Some parents report that there is no formal medium for school-home communication. There are plans for Stoughton High School to open the parent portal within their PowerSchool system, allowing guardians access to their student's attendance, discipline records, and grades. There is a small work study program in place, but few partnerships exist that would allow students to take field trips to museums, businesses, or to a college or university. While Stoughton High School does have some external relationships, a more comprehensive plan is needed to enlist the financial and philosophical support of more partners and to access more community resources and involve community members in the learning processes of SHS students. (self-study, parents, students)

Commendations

1. The availability of SMARTBoards in most classrooms throughout Stoughton High School
2. The eleven computer labs throughout Stoughton High School
3. The outstanding efforts by custodial and maintenance personnel to maintain an aging and outdated facility despite its many challenges
4. Updated kitchen facilities

Recommendations

1. Address all water leaks (windows, fascia) in the A Building that impact the guidance suite, the main office, the media center, and some classrooms
2. Provide adequate funding to support all staffing needs at the school, including the library/media specialist and an adequate number of substitute teachers
3. Immediately address all ADA accessibility in the A Building
4. Establish a long-range, detailed, and specific master facilities plan that includes a consistent funding mechanism to address the significant facilities concerns that negatively impact teaching and learning
5. Increase custodial support in order to ensure regular cleaning
6. Increase maintenance support in order to provide for regular maintenance of the facility and grounds
7. Support the acquisition of the supplies and materials needed to provide a 21st century education for all students
8. Provide dedicated, in-house technology support
9. Implement a plan to actively engage parents and families, specifically those families who have been less connected with the school

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

Since it is in the best interest of the students that the citizens of the district become aware of the strengths and limitations of the school and suggested recommendations for improvement, the 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 of Stoughton High School submit routine Two- and Five-Year Progress Reports documenting the current status of all evaluation report recommendations, with particular detail provided for any recommendation which may have been rejected or those items on which no action has been taken. In addition, responses must be detailed on all recommendations highlighted by the Commission in its notification letters to the school. School officials are expected to have completed or be in the final stages of completion of all valid visiting committee recommendations by the time the Five-Year Progress Report is submitted. The Commission may request additional Special Progress Reports if one or more of the Standards are not being met in a satisfactory manner or if additional information is needed on matters relating to evaluation report recommendations or substantive changes in the school.

To ensure that it has current information about the school, the Commission has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Commission within sixty days (60) of occurrence any substantive change which negatively impacts on 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.

In closing, the visiting committee wishes to express its deep appreciation for the hospitality, warmth, and courtesy extended so graciously by the students, parents, teachers, administrators, and city officials associated with Stoughton High School. The relationship of sincerity and trust was extremely helpful to the members of the visiting team. The committee wishes the community of Stoughton success in all its future endeavors.

APPENDICES

Stoughton High School
NEASC Accreditation Visit
March 6-9, 2011

Visiting Committee Roster

Jan Gauger, Chair Salem High School Salem, NH 03051	Grace Lytle Barnstable High School Hyannis, MA 02649
Joseph Goho, Assistant Chair North Providence High School North Providence, RI 02904	Linda Maresca Tahanto Regional Middle /High School Boylston, MA 01505
David Anderson Salem High School Salem, NH 03051	Christine Mars Wareham High School Wareham, MA 02571
Michele Brady Clinton Public Schools Clinton, MA 01510	Lindsay McKinnon Hopedale Junior/Senior High School Hopedale, MA 01747
Dana Brown Malden High School Malden, MA 02148	Ginny Turner Barnstable High School Hyannis, MA 02649
Amy Cetner Bourne High School Bourne, MA 02532	Candice Van Aken Medford High School Medford, MA 02155
Jacqueline Hilton North Providence High School North Providence, RI 02904	Ada Wong Boston Latin School Boston, MA 02115
Frank Hoek Medway High school Medway, MA 02053	

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

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

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