

New England Association of
Schools and Colleges



Commission on Public Secondary Schools

Report of the Visiting Committee for
Plainville High School

Plainville, Connecticut
October 25-28, 2009

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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 located in Bedford, Massachusetts considers this visiting committee report of Plainville 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, board of education, 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 Plainville 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 team.

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

- Mission and Expectations for Student Learning

- Curriculum

- Instruction

- Assessment of Student Learning

Support of Teaching and Learning Standards

- Leadership and Organization

- School Resources for Learning

- Community Resources for Learning

The accreditation program for public schools involves a threefold process: the self-study conducted by the local professional staff, the on-site evaluation conducted by the Commission's visiting committee, and the follow-up program carried out by the school to implement the findings of its own self-study and the valid recommendations of the visiting committee and those identified by the Commission in the Follow-Up process. Continued accreditation requires that the school be reevaluated at least once every ten years and that it show continued progress addressing identified needs.

Preparation for the Evaluation Visit - The School Self-Study

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At Plainville High School, a committee of 14 members, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned all teachers and administrators in the school to appropriate subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities, and facilities available for young people. In addition to faculty members, the self-study committees included some limited participation from parents and students. The self-study of Plainville High School extended over a period of seventeen school months from September 2006 to March 2008.

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, Plainville High School also used questionnaires developed by The Endicott 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 15 evaluators was assigned by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate Plainville High School. The Committee members spent four days in Plainville, Connecticut, reviewed the self-study documents which had been prepared for their examination, met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students, 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 school teachers, school administrators, and central office administrators, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Plainville High School.

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 60 hours shadowing 15 students for three block periods
- a total of 15 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
- the examination of school documents such as curricula, the program of studies, and the student handbook

Each conclusion on the report was agreed to by team consensus. Sources of evidence for each conclusion drawn by the visiting committee appear in parenthesis in the Standards sections of the report. The seven Standards for Accreditation reports include commendations and recommendations that in the team'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 Plainville 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.

Quality of the Self-Study

The Plainville High School faculty members and administration prepared the self-study report with a great deal of candor, thoroughness, and professionalism. The quality and quantity of information was worthy of praise and very useful for the visiting committee.

The areas of strength and need identified by the school showed a great deal of reflection and candor. The visiting committee appreciated the thoughtfulness of these data and used them effectively and efficiently. The self-study binders were delivered to the committee members in a timely fashion that allowed sufficient time for them to review the documents and to begin to draw initial conclusions and to formulate questions for further investigation during the visit.

Discussion of Significant Findings regarding:

Teaching and Learning at Plainville High School

The school's mission statement reflects the Plainville Community Schools Vision to "Promote a challenging environment creating an extraordinary community of learners" and board of education goals that focus on parental and community involvement in the schools and effective communication between the schools, parents, and community. Many teachers reference relevant academic expectations within instruction. Ninth grade students receive direct instruction about the mission and learning expectations as a part of their academy curriculum. The school makes a concerted effort to communicate with all constituencies through a variety of programs and practices. Co-curricular programs, community service opportunities, and established codes of conduct provide all students with varied means to practice and accomplish the expectations set forth in the school's mission statement. Hence, the Plainville High School mission and expectations for student learning are fully reflected in the educational and co-curricular programs of the school and reflects the vision and goals of the community.

Written curriculum documents vary in format and detail, depending on each department's current stage in the curriculum development and implementation cycle. In some areas, subject area content, relevant school-wide learning expectations, course-specific learning goals, instructional strategies, and assessment techniques using school-wide rubrics are evident in the written curricula, with essential understandings, guiding questions, and key skills identified using a consistent concept-based format.

Students at Plainville High School are sometimes engaged in inquiry, problem-solving, authentic applications of their learning, and high order thinking skills. For example, five of six classroom observations in unified arts demonstrated authentic application of learning which included repairing bicycles for the community and designing the school web site; many students in science were observed designing labs and using problem-solving skills, and the music and art

departments regularly prepare students for authentic creative presentations. In the academic level social studies courses, students engage in inquiry, apply their learning and use high order thinking to complete assignments such as examining primary source documents and participating in mock trials. This level of engagement and rigor is not pervasive across all levels of instruction. This is most notable in standard level courses.

In some areas Plainville High School has implemented a variety of activities and programs promoting personalized instruction, making connections across disciplines, engaging students as active learners and encouraging self-assessment and reflection. The Freshman Academy is a transition program in which ninth grade students attend weekly orientation sessions to familiarize them with the school and its resources. In the self-study survey 73.4% of students stated they feel comfortable meeting with their teachers for instructional help as needed. Although there is one formal interdisciplinary course, American Studies, there are few examples of cross-disciplinary lessons and instructional strategies at the classroom level. Almost all teachers state that their students are engaged actively and that classroom lessons and activities are student-centered. However, during observations some teachers in some departments conducted student-centered lessons. Nearly all lessons and student work evidenced opportunities for student self-assessment and reflection. Lessons and activities requiring higher order thinking skills were sometimes evident in both the academic and honors level science programs. Students are given inconsistent opportunities to become active learners who assess and reflect upon their own work and can show they can apply and demonstrate their knowledge.

For most learning activities teachers clarify to students the school-wide academic expectations and course specific learning goals. They are required to use school-wide rubrics for two learning activities each quarter to clarify to students the relevant school-wide academic expectations that will be assessed. The mission statement, and school-wide rubrics are posted in all classrooms. Some teachers have provided models to inform students of the expected quality of

the work. Most teachers use course specific rubrics and students report that they understand how their work is graded.

Support of Teaching and Learning at Plainville High School

The principal provides leadership in the school community by creating and maintaining a shared vision, direction, and focus for student learning. The principal regularly seeks feedback from parents, students and faculty members regarding the vision of the school. He hosts monthly parent advisory meetings, leadership forums with students, and is continuously available to talk to parents, students, or faculty. The principal collaborates with the school's instructional leaders to develop strategies for instructional reform. Instructional leaders along with their departments are required to use data to reflect on their practice and inform future decisions by developing strategies to facilitate student progress in meeting the school's academic expectations.

Student grouping patterns infrequently reflect the diversity of the student body or foster heterogeneity. The unified arts classes are generally heterogeneous because they are typically only offered at one level. There are some core academic classes that contain both honors and academic level at the same time, but they are infrequent. The majority of core content classes are offered at three levels: honors, academic and standard. Generally, the levels do not represent the school population at-large in regards to gender, free and reduced lunch status, and special education. Although 10.4% of the student body at-large has been identified as special education, these students are almost exclusively found at the standard level in the core academic courses. Co-teaching only exists for standard level classes.

Plainville High School's support services are consistent with the school's mission and expectations for student learning. The support services include a comprehensive guidance program, health services, library media and technology services, and a special education program that supports students with special needs. Library services provide access to a variety of technology and information resources both within and outside the school community. The special

education department offers a variety of special education programs that provide equal access to the curriculum for all students at the standard level through modifications and accommodations. In addition the Connections Program offers emotional support to those students identified in need.

There is a planned and adequately funded program of building and site management to ensure the appropriate maintenance, repair, and cleanliness of the school plant. Plainville High School has a formal plan and schedule for the maintenance and cleaning of the facility. Supplies and equipment are adequate to provide for appropriate maintenance, repair, and cleanliness of the school plant. State-of-the-art maintenance monitoring programs are in place. The school facility is a source of pride for students, staff, faculty, parents, and the community, and all stakeholders are satisfied with the maintenance and cleanliness of the facility.

School and Community Profile

The Community

Incorporated in 1869, the town of Plainville, located in Hartford County, comprises an area of 9.6 square miles. Located approximately fifteen miles southwest of Hartford, Connecticut, Plainville is easily accessible by Interstate 84, Route 72, and Route 10, and is bordered by the cities of Bristol and New Britain, and the towns of Southington and Farmington. Geographically, Plainville is the third smallest town in the state.

In recent years, Plainville has experienced numerous renovations and updates to accommodate the diverse needs of an ever-changing society. Plainville is home to the newly renovated Wheeler Regional YMCA, a state-of-the-art firehouse, and the newly constructed and updated police station. The town has also recently updated Norton Park, home to the annual Plainville Hot Air Balloon Festival. Plainville recently upgraded and expanded the public library, and has undergone renovations to the center of town. Along with Norton Park, Plainville is also home to Paderewski Park, Trumbull Park, and the Tomasso Nature Park. The historic Farmington Canal is also located in Plainville.

According to the 2000 census, Plainville is a predominantly blue-collar community with roughly 68.0% of the community working in blue-collar professions. Major businesses in Plainville include retail shops, such as those located in the recently constructed Connecticut Commons, which is home to numerous retail stores, car dealerships, and restaurants. In the past, the major industry in Plainville was manufacturing; however, in recent years manufacturing has declined, with a few remaining companies such as General Electric, Mott Metallurgical, and Gems Sensors. In 1999, there were 512 businesses in Plainville; and in 2008 there are nearly 700 businesses in the town. Services represent 35.5% of these establishments, followed by 23.6% retail trade and 10.6% manufacturing. Plainville's unemployment rate is 3.2% as of the 2000 census, but its current unemployment rate is now 8.1% (Connecticut Department of Labor, 2009).

The population of Plainville is 17, 328. According to the 2000 census, the median age of a Plainville resident is 39.6 years. The median household income is \$48,136, which places residents below the state average. The percentage of the population below the poverty level is 5.1%, and the percentage of families in the school community with incomes below the poverty level is 15.0%.

Plainville's school system comprises three elementary schools: Linden Street Elementary School, Louis Toffolon Elementary School, and Frank T. Wheeler Elementary School; and one middle school, the Middle School of Plainville, and one high school, Plainville High School (PHS). For the 2008-2009 school year, 2,594 students are enrolled in Plainville schools. Many students and citizens take advantage of the programs offered by Plainville's recreation department, adult education program, summer programs and theater programs. In addition to public schools, Plainville has two non-public schools in the town.

The per-pupil expenditure for Plainville students in 2006-2007 was \$10,549, compared to the state average of \$11,558. The per pupil expenditure in 2007-2008 was \$10,901, while the state average per pupil cost was \$12,151. As of 2007-2008, 66.4% of property taxes were allocated to the school district budget, which is a decrease from the 69.4% allocated in 2006-2007.

The School and Students

For the 2008-2009 school year, Plainville High School serves 864 students in grades nine through twelve. The population is largely Caucasian, comprising 86.6% of the total student population. The remainder of the school population includes the following ethnicities: African American 5.7%, Hispanic 4.9%, Asian American 2.7% and American Indian 0.1%. The number of non-resident students is 16 students (these students are enrolled in the Project Choice Program), which is 2.0% of the 2008-2009 high school population. In recent years, both the

Caucasian and African American populations have increased by approximately 1.0%. The school enrollment is generally constant with minor fluctuations from year to year.

The total number of teachers at Plainville High School (PHS) as of the 2008-2009 school year is 65.4 and the average student- teacher ratio is 14.8 students to 1 teacher. Most teachers teach five classes, with the average class size being 18.76 students. Therefore, the average student load for teachers is 93.8. Plainville High School operates on an eight period rotating schedule. Each class period meets for fifty-seven minutes with two class periods rotating out each day. All faculty have common planning time. Three blocks of the eight blocks are set aside for common planning, which equates to 171 minutes every eight days. The average daily teacher attendance rate is 95.5%.

Students enter PHS predominately from the Middle School of Plainville. However, there are a limited number of students who transfer in from five area private schools. The average daily student attendance rate for the past two years is 82.75%. The drop out rate for 2007-2008 was 0.9%, which decreased from the 2006-2007 rate of 1.3%.

Students at PHS are recognized for academic achievement each quarter through the Renaissance honor roll program with postings in the school and in local newspapers. Other academic awards include membership in National Honor Society and World Language National Honor Societies. Additionally, students are recognized at the end of their senior year at *The Night Of Excellence* for their academic and athletic achievements. Non-academic awards include: the annual town wide art show, sportsmanship awards, Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) awards in the Arts, and certificates for athletic participation.

There are three academic levels at PHS - honors, academic and standard. Included in the honors level is Advanced Placement. Plainville High School has strategically placed paraprofessionals, tutors and special education teachers in supportive and co-teaching roles in all disciplines. The following learning communities provide support for students' academic

performance: Learning Center, Homework Club, Writing Center, Academic Support, the Connections Program, and Student Support.

Academically, the high school has either met or has exceeded the state requirements for all Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) subject area tests. The following CAPT results are based on the percentage of Grade 10 students meeting the Goal level for the state, which is more demanding than the state Proficient level. In 2007-2008 PHS scored 52.8% for Reading, 59.5% for Writing, 52.8% for Math, and 45.2% for Science. The state averages were 45.5% for Reading, 57.9% for Writing, 50.1% for Math and 46.3% for science. SAT scores for 2007-2008 were generally higher than the state average. The school average for math was 510, 501 for critical reading and 504 for writing in comparison to the state averages of 504 for math, 502 for critical reading, and 503 for writing. Nationally, the SAT averages for 2008 were 502 for critical reading, 494 for writing and 515 for math.

School-wide rubrics are used to evaluate student performance beyond standardized testing. These rubrics align with Plainville High School's mission statement. Department rubrics are also used to assess student performance. Common assessments, including midterm and final exams, are administered each semester.

In addition to the academic graduation requirement of 23.7 credits, students are also required to complete ten hours of community service. This requirement encourages students to be respectful and responsible members of society and to interact within the community and support the PHS mission statement related to civic and social expectations. Since the 2007-2008 school year, PHS annually hosts the "Be the Change" Community Service Fair, where students are exposed to and enroll in various volunteer opportunities offered throughout Plainville and surrounding communities.

During the 2007-2008 school year there were eighty students serviced in the special education program. This represents 8.9% of the student population. The percentage of students in Bilingual/English Language Learners (ELL) courses is 0.8%.

In addition, in the past two years, thirty-nine students were also enrolled in college courses while attending PHS. From the class of 2008, 52.0% of graduates attended four-year colleges, 32.0% enrolled into two-year colleges, 10.0% entered in vocational/training schools, 5.0% entered directly into the workforce, and 1.0% entered the military. Nearby educational opportunities available to students include but are not limited to: the Tunxis Partnership Program, The College Career Pathways, the University of Connecticut (UConn) Cooperative program, and the Center for Creative Youth at Wesleyan University.

There have been many school-to-career opportunities since the 1998 NEASC accreditation process. Students have participated in job shadows, internships and many work-based learning opportunities. Some examples include: visits to General Electric on Groundhog Day and matching with an employee during the work day, communications students visit to Channel 30 - NBC, science student visits to Hartford Hospital, and many types of community projects, such as the Plainville town wide art show and Habitat for Humanity.

The physical education department has many community partnerships. This includes the Plainville Police Narcotics Team, where students are educated about new teen driving laws as well as laws dealing with drugs and alcohol. In addition, the Plainville YWCA sexual assault unit presents workshops on issues such as sexual assault, bullying, and harassment. Moreover, the local organizations of the Saint Philip House and the Prudence Crandall Center present workshops to students on healthy and unhealthy relationships, HIV, and AIDS. These community resources are used to support unit objectives and essential understandings in courses throughout the school year. The world language department partners with the Early College Experience Program at the University of Connecticut. Students enrolled in Spanish IV have the opportunity to earn three college credits in Spanish each semester from the University of Connecticut. The PHS social studies department is involved in a grant program through the Capital Region Education Council (CREC), UConn and CCSU called "Teaching American History". It was a four-year program in which four teachers participated at various times during 2005-2008. They

were instrumental in organizing the program and helping to acquire the \$1,000,000 federal grant shared by ten Hartford County schools in partnership with CREC, UCONN and CCSU.

School Improvement Planning

School improvement planning occurs in many different ways at Plainville High School. In terms of standardized tests, the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) data is reviewed, analyzed, and interpreted by department teams, a district administrative team, district and instructional leader teams and vertical curriculum teams (e.g. Math Cadre and Language Arts improvement teams). The target is to move students across disciplines from bands 2 to 3. The high school has focused efforts to improve overall student scores. These include a new writing center initiative to assist students, a reading class that helps students develop and improve reading skills, and CAPT designed activities within 9th and 10th grade classes across disciplines. Additionally, there has been curriculum review and alignment especially in math and science. These efforts begin at the middle school level and continue through high school course work.

With an effort to increase student engagement and improve learning, instructional practices are examined. Included in this is *OnCourse* lesson plan development and design, which ensures alignment to the school mission and expectations, and peer visits for teachers to observe various methods of instruction. These initiatives to improve planning and instruction have resulted in increased administrative visitations/observations (walkthroughs) of teachers and their teaching methods, including visitations by district administrators and instructional leaders.

The number of students in the special education program has steadily declined over the past several years from 95 in the 2007-2008 school year to 80 in the 2008-2009 year. There are several factors responsible for the reduction in the number of special education students. The first is the intensive interventions being provided at the elementary and middle school levels, as well as remedial programs at the high school, for students who have not yet met goal on state assessments. A second factor includes increased support provided by special education staff,

particularly in standard level classes. Over the past two years, PHS has strategically placed paraprofessionals, tutors and special education teachers in supportive and co-teaching roles in all disciplines. As a result, all students benefit from the increased adult-student ratio and this reduces referrals to special education that may have been made if the supports were not in place. A third factor is the increased capacity and training of general education teachers to meet the needs of learners.

In addition, there has been a reduction in the number of self-contained classes. In previous years, self-contained classes were conducted in all major subject areas as part of the resource program, as well as part of the Connections program designed to meet the needs of students with emotional and behavioral disorders, and the Accelerated Learning Program for Students (ALPS), which was designed to meet the needs of students with developmental disabilities. However, over the past two years, in order to comply with the legal mandates of No Child Left Behind, the number of self-contained classes has been reduced and replaced with co-taught classes, where students with moderate to severe disabilities are included in the general education setting. For the 2008-2009 year, 70.0% of all special education students spend 80.0% or more of their day with non-disabled peers, which is an increase from 60.0% in the 2007-2008 school year.

School's Mission Statement and Expectations for Learning

Plainville High School is a learning community dedicated to preparing all students to meet ever-changing personal and global challenges by promoting their intellectual, emotional, physical, social, and cultural growth.

Plainville High School encourages all students to be respectful and responsible members of a diverse democratic society. Plainville High School fosters student success by facilitating communication and cooperation among students, educators, parents, and the community.

Expectations for Student Learning

Academic Expectations for Student Learning

Upon graduation, all students will:

1. read actively and critically.
2. communicate effectively through writing and speaking.
3. demonstrate proficiency in critical and creative thinking.
4. access, evaluate, and apply information through the use of technology.
5. utilize problem solving and reasoning strategies.
6. demonstrate competence in and/or an understanding of artistic and creative expression.

Civic and Social Expectations for Student Learning

Upon graduation, all students will:

7. assume responsibility for their behavior.
8. contribute to the school and community.
9. understand the significance of their role in a global society.
10. appreciate the benefits of a physically, emotionally, and socially healthy lifestyle.
11. recognize the ever-changing diversity present both locally and globally.

**COMMISSION ON
PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**



**TEACHING AND LEARNING
STANDARDS**

**MISSION AND EXPECTATIONS
FOR STUDENT LEARNING
CURRICULUM
INSTRUCTION
ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING**

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

1

MISSION AND EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT LEARNING

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

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

Teaching and Learning Standards

Standard 1: Mission and Expectations for Student Learning

Conclusions:

The Plainville High School's Mission Statement and Expectations for Student Learning were developed by a representative committee, shared with various constituencies, and adopted by the faculty and the board of education. Work on the document began in the fall of 2005 when the principal appointed a committee of nine teachers. The two co-chairs of the committee then chose four students, two parents, and one board of education member to join them. This committee met in February 2006 to review the previous mission statement, draft a new mission statement, and identify academic, civic, and social learning expectations. The proposed academic, civic, and social expectations were compressed into more concise language and changed student focus from attaining specific curriculum knowledge to acquiring and demonstrating broader academic, civic, and social skills. The mission and expectations draft was then widely distributed within the school and community in an attempt to solicit opinions. The faculty, student liaison committee, and parent advisory board were asked for input. The draft was also e-mailed to parents and printed in local newspapers in order to solicit input from the community. The committee incorporated the few suggestions received and presented a final mission statement and learning expectations for faculty and board of education approval in June 2006. Response to the Endicott Survey conducted in March 2008 indicates significant awareness of the mission statement and student learning expectations on the part of faculty members, students, parents, and board of education members. Thus, the process used by the school community to develop the PHS Mission and Expectations for Student Learning resulted in broad understanding of and approval for what the school seeks to achieve. (self-study, survey, mission standard subcommittee chairs)

The school's mission statement reflects the Plainville community schools' vision document to "Promote a challenging environment creating an extraordinary community of learners" and board of education goals that focus on parental and community involvement in the schools and effective communication between the schools, parents, and community. The board of education's goal to promote higher student achievement in English/language arts aligns directly with the school's first and second academic expectations. The board's goal for higher achievement in mathematics and science is supported through all the school's learning expectations. In addition, the school's learning expectations parallel the school's graduation performance standards. The mission statement and expectations for student learning are highly visible throughout the school. The description of subject course offerings in the program of studies is headed by the learning expectations that are the primary and secondary focus of that curriculum area. Many teachers reference relevant academic expectations within instruction. Ninth grade students receive direct instruction about the mission and learning expectations as a part of their academy curriculum. The school makes an effort to communicate with all constituencies through a variety of programs and practices. Co-curricular programs, community service opportunities, and established codes of conduct provide all students with varied means to practice and accomplish the expectations set forth in the school's mission statement. Hence, the Plainville High School Mission and Expectations for Student Learning are fully reflected in the educational and co-curricular programs of the school and reflects the vision and goals of the community. (self-study, program of studies, school publications, website, strategic plan)

The academic, civic, and social expectations adopted by the school in June 2006 are consistent with the essence of the school's mission statement and compatible with the school's educational and co-curricular programs. The six academic expectations are specific enough to be appropriately addressed within relevant curriculum areas and broad enough to be practiced within all subjects. For example, the English department has designated reading actively and critically and communicating effectively through writing and speaking as its primary focus; critical and

creative thinking and the use of technology are its secondary focus. Conversely, the mathematics department designates the use of technology, problem solving, and reasoning strategies as its expectations for primary focus, with communicating effectively and critical, creative thinking as expectations for secondary focus. Graduation performance standards also include civic and social expectations; for example, for successful “citizenship” students must to show evidence that they are contributing members of the school and local community. All the academic expectations are measurable and have clearly defined criteria that demonstrate levels of achievement in the rubrics developed for each expectation. However, civic and social expectations #3, 4, and 5 do not lend themselves to observable actions that can be easily measured. Therefore, while the school’s academic, civic, and social expectations are identified and clearly reflect the school’s mission, not all of the civic and social expectations are measurable and therefore the school is not fully able to report the degree to which students are fulfilling these expectations. (self-study, program of studies, class visits, teachers)

Plainville High School has rubrics in place for each academic expectation but does not identify a targeted level of successful achievement. Cross-discipline teacher committees developed these academic rubrics during the fall semester of 2007. Faculty committees developed four-point rubrics that describe levels of achievement: 4 excellence, 3 proficiency, 2 approaching proficiency, and 1 basic. The faculty endorsed the rubrics by unanimous vote in December 2007 and agreed to pilot their use during the spring semester. Then, beginning in September 2008, teachers agreed to use school-wide rubrics to assess student achievement of academic expectations twice per quarter. Teachers are able to post student results online so that students and parents can track student accomplishments throughout the school year. The school publishes its rubrics and an explanation of how they are used in its program of studies, but the target level for success for each rubric is not explicitly identified. The explanation emphasizes that levels of achievement on the school-wide rubrics do not affect a student’s numerical grade in a specific course but does not state why. Thus, differences between achievement on school-wide academic

expectations and grades earned in specific courses are not clarified. Only with an identified target level for successful achievement will students and parents be able to track individual student learning, and the school will be able to assess the effectiveness of curriculum instruction. (self-study, program of studies, faculty, district administrators)

Plainville High School has many rich and varied opportunities for students to apply and practice its civic and social expectations. The school is successful in guiding students to assume responsibility for their behavior and for contributing to the school and community. A comprehensive handbook includes all the policies, rules, and procedures a student needs to know about his/her attendance, conduct, participation in co-curricular activities, services available to cope with problems, and overall well-being in school. Students and parents are required to sign an acknowledgement page in the handbook to verify that they have read, understand, and agree to abide by policies and regulations. Ninety-nine percent of parents responding to the 2008 Endicott Survey state they know the behavior expected of their child, and the school reports a 100% return of the acknowledgement page. The school has also adjusted its disciplinary practices on the basis of data that showed a need to do so. Along with a wide variety of co-curricular activities and off-campus programs, the school requires ten hours of service learning for graduation. In general, Plainville High School students participate in extensive community service activities and value the experience. Curriculum area departments such as social studies, world languages, and physical education have incorporated relevant civic and social expectations into their curriculum, also providing potential documentation of school progress. Student surveys provide the school with some data of how programs and activities such as community service and mentoring affect civic and social accomplishments. As a result, the school is not yet able to determine and document student and school progress in achieving school-wide civic and social expectations. (self-study, student handbook, student surveys, teachers)

The school's mission statement and expectations for student learning are very often in the current culture of the school. The mission statement has provided a common language for faculty

members, students, and parents to understand, discuss, and apply through the school's learning expectations. The school states that the mission has "grounded" teachers and offered a sharper instructional focus by promoting a "conscious understanding" of how the existing curriculum meets the rigor and challenges of the mission and expectations. Teachers have noted that the mission is versatile and that they can easily explain how instruction reflects the academic expectations. While the school is in the initial stages of using its mission, there are some examples of ways in which it has begun to drive the school's programming. (self-study, observations, central office administrators, teachers)

The Plainville High School Mission Statement and Expectations for Student Learning are new, and a formal review and revision has not been conducted. The school intends to elicit feedback from all faculty and staff members, students, parents, board of education members and community members. When a plan is in place for timely review and revision, including designated representatives of all stakeholders, the school and community can assess whether the mission statement and expectations continues to reflect student needs, community expectations, the district mission, and state and national standards. (self-study, administrators, mission standard subcommittee chairs)

Commendations

1. The broad-based and inclusive process employed in the development of the school's Mission and Expectations
2. The extent to which the mission and expectations for student learning aligns with the district vision, board of education goals, and student performance standards
3. The degree to which academic expectations can be applied and practiced in all curriculum areas
4. The visibility of the mission statement and expectations for student learning within all aspects of the school

5. The use of the school's Mission and Expectations to drive curriculum development and the school's assessment practice

Recommendations

1. Set a target of successful achievement for each academic expectation rubric and communicate this target to students and parents
2. State all civic and social expectations in measurable terms and regularly report the progress of individual students and the student body in meeting them

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

2 CURRICULUM

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

1. Each curriculum area shall identify those school-wide academic expectations for which it is responsible.
2. The curriculum shall be aligned with the school-wide academic expectations and shall ensure that all students have sufficient opportunity to practice and achieve each of those expectations.
3. The written curriculum shall:
 - prescribe content;
 - integrate relevant school-wide learning expectations;
 - identify course-specific learning goals;
 - suggest instructional strategies;
 - suggest assessment techniques including the use of school-wide rubrics.
4. The curriculum shall engage all students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking as well as provide opportunities for the authentic application of knowledge and skills.
5. The curriculum shall:
 - be appropriately integrated;
 - emphasize depth of understanding over breadth of coverage.
6. The school shall provide opportunities for all students to extend learning beyond the normal course offerings and the school campus.
7. There shall be effective curricular coordination and articulation between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district.
8. Instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, staffing levels, and the resources of the library/media center shall be sufficient to allow for the implementation of the curriculum.
9. The professional staff shall be actively involved in the ongoing development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum based on assessments of student performance in achieving the school's academic expectations and course-specific learning goals.
10. The school shall commit sufficient time, financial resources, and personnel to the development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum.
11. Professional development activities shall support the development and implementation of the curriculum.

Standard 2: Curriculum

Conclusions:

The school's program of studies identifies academic expectations for each curricular area, and each department has identified primary, and in some cases, secondary focus areas. The new academic expectations are embedded in those curriculum documents that have been recently revised. Therefore, school faculty and, staff members, students, and parents are aware of the school-wide expectations for which each department is responsible. (teachers, program of studies, school leaders, curriculum documents)

Many student learning activities are aligned with the mission and expectations for student learning. Students have varied opportunities, support services, and programs to help them achieve the academic expectations outlined in the mission statement. Curriculum documents in a wide array of courses and electives delineate the content, skills, and expectations of the mission statement and offer all students the opportunity to meet the academic expectations. For example, students in biology focus on critical and creative thinking and evaluate and apply their knowledge using technology; many also participate in the Outer Island Field Trip or Forest Diversity Lab or visit Hammonasset State Park with the AP Biology class. The math curriculum provides students with opportunities to utilize problem-solving and reasoning strategies when collecting data. Students are able to access the after-school homework club and in-school learning center to obtain academic support, and the Connections program provides support to students whose behavior interferes with their learning. The math department has offered an accelerated summer program so that students who wish to increase the rigor of their coursework can obtain the necessary prerequisites. A majority of students is aware of the learning expectations in their classes and indicate that these academic expectations pertain to several courses. Written uniform curriculum documents that prescribe content, integrate relevant school-wide learning expectations, include course specific learning goals, suggest instructional strategies, and suggest

assessments techniques including the use of school-wide rubrics have not been consistently developed for each content area . (parents, program of studies, curriculum documents, teachers, school leadership team)

Written curriculum documents vary in format and detail, depending on each department's stage in the curriculum development and implementation cycle. In some areas, subject area content, relevant school-wide learning expectations, course-specific learning goals, instructional strategies, and assessment techniques using school-wide rubrics are evident in the written curricula, with essential understandings, guiding questions, and key skills identified using a consistent concept-based format. Additionally, the teacher instructional plan, expected performances, and assessments are evident in social studies, science, and math curricula. Although all teachers use an online program, On Course, for lesson planning, a consistent curriculum format is not yet fully implemented and several subject areas will require revamping of the formatting and content, as well as inclusion of the mission statement and academic expectations as they revise curriculum. Thus, while teachers do have access to appropriate written curriculum for the courses that they teach, the varying format and approaches found in the documents may hamper interdisciplinary coordination and collaboration. (curriculum guides, school leadership team, classroom observations, program of studies)

Not all students have an equitable opportunity to meet the expectations for student learning through inquiry, problem-solving, authentic applications of their learning, and high order thinking skills. For example, five of six classroom observations in unified arts demonstrated authentic application of learning which include repairing bicycles for the community and designing the school web site; students in science were observed designing labs and using problem-solving skills, and the music and art departments regularly prepare students for authentic creative presentations. In the academic level social studies courses, students were observed engaging in inquiry, applying their learning and using high order thinking to complete assignments such as examining primary source documents and participating in mock trials.

Similarly, in the academic level English courses the analysis of literary texts provides the opportunity to read actively and critically and use higher-order thinking skills. However, this level of engagement and rigor is not pervasive across all levels of instruction. A lack of rigor and application of learning is most notable in standard level courses. (teacher interviews, curriculum documents, students, self-study, classroom observation)

An inconsistency exists in the extent to which the curriculum is integrated and emphasizes depth of understanding. Curriculum guides that have been recently updated emphasize depth of understanding over breadth of content by including essential understandings and guiding questions and are appropriately integrated both within and between departments. In the current schedule, common planning time has provided teachers with the opportunity to integrate core concepts, technology skills, and classroom collaboration into the curriculum. This is especially evident between math and science departments and English and U.S History. Information Literacy integrates library media skills and technology, delineating the role of the classroom teacher with each essential question. Additionally, many instructional leaders have designed carefully sequenced courses based on state frameworks, CAPT testing, and student academic expectations. (teachers, Endicott Survey, students, school leadership team, central office, curriculum documents)

Plainville High School provides many varied authentic opportunities for students to extend learning beyond the normal course offerings. Students can participate in many co-curricular activities highly connected to academic course work in science such as: Biomedical Club, Scuba Club, and National Ocean Science Bowl, and activities promoting the arts such as art demonstrations and music performances. The school also provides opportunities for students to participate in co-curricular activities that promote and enhance student understanding of diversity and other cultures, such as world language trips, World Affairs Council, and Helping Our Peers Excel (HOPE) as well as leadership groups such as National Leadership Forum. Many job shadowing opportunities and internships are also available. College credit is available via the

college career pathways through Tunxis Community College, advanced placement, and UCONN's Early College Experience credit program. Students are required to engage in ten hours of service learning by the end of tenth grade and are able to select a volunteer activity at the Community Service Fair, giving them an opportunity to give back to the community. (program of studies, teachers, self-study, students)

Curricular coordination and articulation exists between and among some academic areas of the school and to some extent with the middle school to ensure that expectations for student learning are being addressed. Instructional leaders meet with middle school and central office personnel to review curriculum at least four times per year. The Math Cadre and Instructional Leaders' Summit have identified areas for review and revised curriculum accordingly. Teachers meet during common planning time to coordinate lessons. The library media specialist has taught lessons cooperatively with a variety of subject area teachers and has located database and print materials appropriate to each discipline. Some subject areas have created curriculum mapping guides to align the progression of student learning in their discipline. Excel lessons taught both in science classes and the library media center are used in a variety of courses including math and social studies. Additionally, Project Opening Doors mandates a minimum of eight hours of vertical teaming for English, science, and math teachers in grades six through twelve. Teachers may use common planning time to observe colleagues both within and outside of their departments. Although teachers are provided with time and compensation for curriculum writing, effective curricular coordination and articulation is inconsistent; teachers are not always aware of the opportunities for collaboration and communication. High school curricula are aligned within several disciplines but not well aligned across disciplines or with the middle school. Therefore, while many departments demonstrate a strong level of alignment, others do not and this may impede students ability to see relevance in all content areas. (teacher interviews, self study, board of education, school leadership team)

Instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, and resources of the library are sufficient for the implementation of the curriculum. All but two classrooms are equipped with interactive white boards, LCD projectors and computers to enhance student learning. Textbooks are updated based on the curriculum review and implementation cycle, and many teachers use online resources. Specialized technology hardware and software include resources for CAD, an internet radio station, and computer art instruction. A fully equipped workout center provides opportunities for the implementation of the Wellness Curriculum. Teachers, students, and parents report that the school provides the appropriate curriculum materials needed for each class. The student/teacher ratio is adequate for implementation of the curriculum, although inconsistencies in class loads currently exist. The number of library books per student is higher than the DRG and state averages. The library is staffed by one library information teacher who aids teachers with technology, blogs, and databases, in addition to facilitating student library media use. She is aided by one paraprofessional. State-of-the-art technology facilitates the implementation of the curriculum and the potential for students to meet academic expectations; however training for teachers on best practices in technology use will only increase its effectiveness. Therefore, resources are sufficient to deliver curriculum successfully and will be more effective once teachers are provided with training. (teacher interviews, student interviews, self study, Endicott Survey)

The assessment of student learning guides the revision of the curriculum and decisions regarding professional development. Instructional leaders across all subject areas share data from common assessments and use this data to guide decisions regarding course sequencing and content. Instructional leaders in math have examined student assessments and revised pacing guides and the curriculum to improve instruction on topics of concern. Teachers use CAPT-like problems in classrooms, and many have been involved in curriculum writing and revision after review of the assessment data. Students take common assessments in many subject areas and teachers use common planning time to collaboratively score, evaluate the data, and work with

instructional leaders to adjust curriculum guides. The district administrators provide professional development time for teachers to use in development of rubrics, assessments, and curriculum materials, and the curriculum is revised on a seven-year cycle. A team of teachers K-12 has release time during the curriculum review cycle to meet and write curriculum. The school is currently collecting data on the academic expectations and entering them into Power School according to the school-wide rubric; this will provide future guidance in analyzing the school's progress toward meeting course-specific learning goals, which can guide revision of the curriculum. As a result, the curriculum is revised to best aid students in achieving the school's academic expectations and course-specific goals. (teacher interviews, board of education, self study, central office)

The school commits sufficient time, personnel, and resources to the development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum. Teachers are provided with release time and their contractual hourly remuneration. Teachers have three common planning blocks per eight-day cycle, which are also used to develop and revise curriculum. Project Opening Doors provides some teachers with professional development to aid them in improving the AP curriculum and in laying the foundation for pre-AP courses. The school leaders recognize the importance of reviewing the curriculum and coordinating faculty efforts to ensure curriculum is evaluated and revised in all subject areas. Plainville High School, with the guidance of the instructional leaders, has endeavored to provide teachers across all subject areas with the necessary tools, resources, and direction for revision of curriculum to meet the needs of students. Therefore, the school's curricula are appropriately up-to-date or are in the process of being updated. (central office personnel, teachers, self-study)

Professional development activities occasionally support the development of the curriculum. The high school offers ongoing professional development, led by department leaders and focused on either district or school goals. Each department designs the professional development needed during the school year; this may include one to two days of curriculum work

or professional development in concept-based curriculum writing. Although sufficient time is dedicated to the revision of curriculum, the teachers helping to author these documents may not have the benefit of recent training in the process. (teachers, central office personnel, school leadership, CEU documents, self-study)

COMMENDATIONS

1. Varied authentic opportunities for students to extend learning beyond course offerings and the school campus
2. State-of-the-art technology that supports the curriculum
3. Opportunities for collaboration to share common assessment data and use it to guide decisions regarding curriculum

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure that all students have equitable opportunity to engage in inquiry, problem solving, higher-order thinking, and for the authentic application of knowledge and skills
2. Continue curriculum development in the content areas not yet fully addressed to support a consistent format so that they prescribe content, integrate relevant school-wide learning expectations, include course-specific learning goals, suggest instructional strategies, and suggest assessment techniques including the use of school-wide rubrics
3. As part of the curriculum revision process, ensure that all curricula emphasize depth of understanding over breadth of coverage and that the curriculum is appropriately integrated
4. Expand the current models of curricular coordination to include all content areas within the school as well as the sending schools in the district

5. Provide professional development activities specifically focused on the development, review, revision, and implementation of curriculum

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

3 INSTRUCTION

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

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

Standard 3: Instruction

Conclusions:

Instructional strategies at Plainville High School are sometimes consistent with the school's mission statement and expectations for student learning. The students are familiar with the importance of these expectations as part of the school culture and the basis for lessons in the classroom. The teachers recognize the need for a variety of instructional strategies to encourage the sharing of divergent points of view and the benefit to learning for students who have differing learning styles. In some classes, students work in small groups, give oral presentations utilizing PowerPoint and interactive white boards and prepare digital portfolios. The ability to link expectations for student learning to specific lessons through the use of the electronic lesson plan book, OnCourse, facilitates teacher communication for both students and parents. Teachers are encouraged to connect their lessons to essential understandings and some teachers reach across disciplines to enrich student understanding of the unit making connections rather than departmentalizing learning. The opportunity for students to demonstrate critical and creative thinking varies by level, and teacher. Although a variety of instructional strategies is recognized as an important aspect of providing students with the opportunity to master content and maximize learning, more professional development is needed to give all teachers a common set of tools and skills to differentiate instruction. (student work, observations, self-study, panel presentation).

In some areas, Plainville High School has implemented a variety of activities and programs promoting personalized instruction, making connections across disciplines, engaging students as active learners and encouraging self-assessment and reflection. The freshman academy is a transition program in which ninth grade students attend weekly orientation sessions to familiarize them with the school and its resources. In the self-study survey, 73.4% of students stated they feel comfortable meeting with their teachers for instructional help as needed. Although there is one formal interdisciplinary course, American Studies, there are few examples

of cross-disciplinary lessons and instructional strategies at the classroom level. Almost all teachers state that their students are engaged actively and that classroom lessons and activities are student-centered, but during observations did not support this. Many lessons and student work evidences opportunities for student self-assessment and reflection. Lessons and activities requiring higher order thinking skills can be found in both the academic and honors level science programs. In general, examples of deep thinking, authentic application, and rigorous content were notably lacking from the lowest academic level. Students' opportunities to become active learners who assess and reflect upon their own work and can show they can apply and demonstrate their knowledge are inconsistent depending on teacher and level. Thus, there are inconsistencies in students' learning experiences that reveal a need for professional development and a forum for teachers to share successful strategies with colleagues. (self-study, observations, students, student work, teachers)

There are several mechanisms by which parents and students provide feedback to teachers to improve instruction. Teacher-parent communication takes place through phone calls, e-mails and in person. Students provide direct feedback through classroom self-assessments and self-reflections and indirectly through monthly mentoring meetings. Most teachers who solicit feedback from peers and supervisors feel this is a positive way to adjust their instructional strategies to meet students' needs. Teachers receive feedback through both formal and informal channels. Teachers are encouraged to use common planning periods to observe one another through informal classroom observations. Teachers also receive feedback from evaluators and instructional leaders through informal classroom walkthroughs, formal performance evaluations, and professional growth plans. In 2005, additional time was established in the schedule to provide opportunities for teacher-to-teacher dialog. However, these periods do not necessarily unite teachers teaching the same or similar courses. While the time is strongly valued by teachers, some viewed these opportunities as informal and the organization as lacking. Nearly all teachers have stated that common planning periods are utilized mainly for collaboration within a content

area but not across content areas. The self-study survey indicates that 90% of teachers discuss instructional strategies with their peers. While it is apparent that teachers are receptive to suggestions for improving instruction, formal channels of communication with parents and students are not effective for improving instruction. (self-study, teachers, students, instructional leaders)

Teachers at Plainville High School are certified in their content area, some are knowledgeable about current research on effective instructional approaches, and most are reflective about their own practices. The self-study survey indicates that almost 80% of the teaching staff has a masters level or higher degree. Many teachers maintain membership in a variety of professional organizations related to their discipline and are BEST trained. However, the school has not designed professional development opportunities for teachers to further their knowledge in support of current instructional strategies research. Therefore, as students move through their daily schedule, they are not likely to experience a common thread of instructional approaches or terminology pertaining to the learning process, nor are they assured equal opportunity to learn. (self-study, teachers, instructional leaders)

Discussion of instructional strategies at Plainville High School is in its initial stages of development as part of the professional culture of the school. Faculty and department meetings serve as a vehicle for sharing information. Instructional leaders direct department meetings to assist in connecting instruction with the school's mission as well as the academic and social expectations. Teachers exchange ideas about teaching and learning during monthly department meetings, and the Instructional Leader makes recommendations to the curriculum coordinator and the principal concerning possible professional development offerings specific to departments in order to enhance the variety of approaches to best practices and instructional strategies. Although teachers have common planning time, it is difficult for teachers to meet since specific department members do not always share this time. Teachers exchange ideas informally about instructional strategies, lesson plan design, common assessment, CAPT assessments, data collection, and best

practices specific to their content area. Teachers also observe one another as peers, enhancing instructional strategies and content planning. Administrators and the K-12 curriculum coordinator support and promote professional development by encouraging teachers to attend workshops, courses, and other professional development opportunities. The English and the social studies departments promote critical and creative thinking through a course called American Studies, which is an interdisciplinary approach to teaching American culture. The administrative support for teachers to have common planning time is a positive initiative toward making the entire school a learning community of commonality and consistency but it currently lacks a systematic, planned approach that gives a shared sense of purpose for the use of this time. The interdisciplinary American Studies course is an example of a positive initiative for the implementation of varied instructional strategies. Therefore, opportunities to learn about and develop varied approaches to best practices and instructional strategies vary according to the master schedule and individual teachers' choice in how to use the common planning time. (self-study, program of studies, teacher interviews, instructional leaders, students)

While an admirable quantity and quality of technology permeate Plainville High School, it has not yet been fully integrated into engaging instruction so that upon graduation, all students may not have demonstrated the ability to access, evaluate, and apply information through the use of technology. Most classrooms have a Promethean Board which allows the teacher to support instruction through the use of multiple Internet sources and teacher-designed presentations, and students have an opportunity to design presentations for classes by developing a PowerPoint. Students also use Microsoft Excel to develop spreadsheets and graphs. Seven computer labs are available throughout the building with an additional six portable labs containing thirty Mac laptops each. There are two computer labs for the unified arts department. The library information center has a sufficient number of computers, and the library information teacher provides information literacy skills instruction and web-based research for all freshmen. The library also has online databases that can be accessed from both school and home. Many computer courses

are available to students, but none is prescribed as a graduation requirement. There is a district technology integration specialist who works with teachers to include technology with instruction. Communication between parents and teachers is primarily through e-mail and the school's website posts teacher and administrator e-mail addresses. Parents have secure, online access to homework assignments and grades. The district also has an automated phone system for administrators to provide information to staff members, students, and parents. Many students do take the opportunity to use the media center both after and before school for word processing and research. Thus, the faculty is still growing in its ability to fully take advantage of the admirable quantity of technology in the school. (observations, students, student work, teachers)

Plainville High School has chosen to dedicate recent professional development time to the preparation of the accreditation self-study. The district provides five days of professional development each school year, and administrators and the curriculum coordinator inform the faculty of additional opportunities for professional development programs. Topics for the professional development days are based upon district-wide and school-wide goals. Funding is provided for teachers to pursue professional development outside of Plainville High School through attending workshops, vertical team course instruction, and other courses designed to improve instructional strategies. With the plethora of technology available to Plainville staff and students, professional development in technology for teachers has been made available. In order to implement the new mentoring program, teachers received specific training to understand the social, behavioral, and emotional needs of students. Faculty members also received intensive training in the development of rubrics which was instrumental in the creation of the school-wide rubrics. However, there appears to be a disconnect between teachers continuing stated professional development needs and those that have been implemented. (school administrators, teachers, instructional leaders, self-study)

Teacher supervision and evaluation processes are used effectively to improve instruction for the purpose of enhancing student learning and meeting student needs. Teachers are actively

involved in the evaluation process and generally find it helpful for improving self-reflection and improving instructional strategies. Formal observations include a pre-conference meeting, the observation, and a post-conference meeting between teacher and evaluator. Therefore, the supervision and evaluation processes work effectively to improve teaching and learning. (self-study, teachers, instructional leaders)

Commendations:

1. The varied opportunities for student self-assessment and self-reflection
2. The extent to which supervision and evaluation processes improve teaching and learning
3. The district support for improving vertical instructional alignment among many content areas

Recommendations:

1. Ensure that instructional practices for all students consistently personalize instruction, make connections across disciplines, engage students as active and self-directed learners, involve higher-order thinking, promote depth of understanding, and provide students opportunities to apply knowledge and skills
2. Provide more professional development offerings that address teachers' stated needs
3. Develop and implement a formal procedure for teachers and administrators to discuss instructional strategies and student work

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

4

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

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

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

Standard 4: Assessment

Conclusions:

The school continues to develop a process to assess the school-wide rubrics and individual student progress in achieving the academic expectations. Teachers use school-wide rubrics eight times per year to assess students. Each completed assessment is entered into the school's on-line grading. These assessments are specific to each assignment and can be accessed by students and parents. Summary data that reflects the overall students' achievement of the expectations described in the school-wide rubrics is not yet available nor is aggregate data that reflects the percentage of students who have met the academic expectations. Therefore, individual students and families can understand how well each student has met the expectations on an individual assignment, but the school cannot yet quantitatively evaluate how well it is assisting all students to achieve the academic expectations nor the value of the expectations as guiding factors. (teachers, self-study, students)

The school's professional staff has limited access to data to assess the success of the school in achieving its civic and social expectations. Students complete ten hours of community service as part of their graduation requirements, and many students exceed this amount and are enthusiastic in sharing this experience with others. This includes a reflective writing assignment completed after the activity. A pre- and post-survey was completed around a Community Service Fair, and this data was communicated to the whole staff. Completion of the required Life Skills course is additional data. However, there is no summary data that is collected and analyzed for any of these activities and reported to the community nor to students and families. Therefore, necessary changes in curriculum addressing the civic and social expectations are not being driven by data. (self-study, teachers, students)

For most learning activities, teachers clarify to students the school-wide academic expectations and course-specific learning goals. They are required to use school-wide rubrics for

two learning activities each quarter to clarify to students the relevant school-wide academic expectations that will be assessed. The mission statement and school-wide rubrics are posted in all classrooms. Many teachers provide models to inform students of the expected quality of the work. Most teachers use course-specific rubrics and students report that they understand how their work is graded. Most students are able to articulate some of the language found in the school-wide rubrics. Thus, many students understand what is expected of them on individual assignments. (student work, teachers, student shadowing, self-study, students)

Many teachers clarify classroom assessment of student learning for most learning activities. Teachers develop and use assignment-specific, scoring lists to grade student work. On at least eight assessments per year, school-wide rubrics are used in conjunction with the assignment-specific rubric. School-wide discussions of rubrics use have not taken place to establish a common understanding of different levels of proficiency. In general, there has been little work across departments to develop common understandings of how the school-wide rubrics can and should be used. Teachers have not been asked to calibrate their use of these instruments within or across departments. While, Plainville High School has made very strong progress in this area, one critical step remains: uniting teachers across departments to calibrate their evaluation of student work. Thus, students are frequently aware of how their work will be assessed in its tie to the school-wide expectations, but teachers' interpretation of these instruments is likely variable. (student work, teachers, self-study)

Some teachers at Plainville High School use varied assessment strategies most of the time to determine student knowledge, skills, and competencies and to assess student growth over time. In courses where curriculum documents have not been updated to include a suggested variety of assessment strategies, the types of assessment experienced by students is highly dependent upon the individual teacher. While the school currently lacks a systematic approach for ensuring a variety of assessment strategies for each child in each course, assessments observed across the school included projects, lab date journals, tests, research papers, reflection essays, and oral

presentations. Teachers are encouraged to develop their own assessment rubrics based on the school-wide rubrics to measure the student's proficiency. Some teachers and students have opportunities to experience assessment in a variety of forms. Therefore, students' experiences in the demonstration of their learning varies greatly by teacher and department. (self-study, teachers, assessment standard committee, student shadowing)

Teachers at Plainville High School meet collaboratively to discuss and share student work and the assessment process for the purposes of revising the curriculum and improving instruction. Plainville High School offers teachers a common planning time in which teachers can discuss student work and the results of assessments, but the form of collaboration is left to each teacher during this planning time and the quality of this work can depend upon the coincidence of sharing this time with a teacher who has similar classes. In the monthly department meetings, teachers discuss student work and the results of assessments. The science department revising some of its assessments for its standard-level classes to refocus their instruction to improve student performance. There is some collaboration on assessment between departments within the building. While there is a concern as to whether collaboration practices are effectively used throughout the building, teachers do have informal discussions of student work and share student assessment data on a daily basis. Therefore, curriculum and instruction revision is sometimes driven by collaborative evaluation of student work, but this process is not systematic. (self-study, teachers, student shadowing, parents, assessment standard committee)

The professional development program at Plainville High School has provided a significant number of opportunities for on-going and short-term assessment training in the last two and half years. These have included in-service days with the district curriculum coordinator, department meetings, a number of self-studies, and teacher surveys. The district coordinator, department presentations, and teacher sharing are resources for school-wide professional development. For the last two and a half years the school has facilitated a number of workshops on topics in assessment and common task development. Teachers report that there has been a

positive impact on both instruction and on student outcomes. Therefore, professional development has positively impacted student assessment and teaching practices. (self-study, teachers, assessment standard committee)

The school's professional staff communicates individual student progress in achieving school-wide academic expectations to students and their families. The provision of this important information is valued by parents and students. The school has not yet aggregated this data to explain to the community its overall success in helping all students to achieve the academic, civic, and social expectations prior to graduation. Therefore, the school community cannot formally and quantitatively evaluate the school's success in fulfilling its mission and student expectations. (students, self-study, teachers)

Commendations:

1. The breadth and frequency with which teachers use school-wide rubrics to provide feedback to students on their learning
2. The innovative use of grading software to track the students achievement of the school-wide expectations on individual assignments
3. The use of surveys to measure the impact of community service with data shared with teachers
4. The on-line access to student grades and achievement data that allows students and families to understand levels of achievement
5. The initial steps that have been taken to develop a variety of assessment strategies

Recommendations:

1. Implement a process based on aggregate data gathered from the identified indicators to assess the success of the school in achieving its academic, civic, and social expectations
2. Design and adopt a school-wide approach to classroom assessment that ensures each student experiences a variety of approaches in each course
3. Implement protocols for the regular and systematic collaboration and examination of student work to inform instruction and curriculum revision
4. Provide professional development in the use of the school-wide rubrics that includes calibration across multiple teachers and departments
5. Provide professional development in the use of assessment data to inform curriculum revision and instructional improvement

SUPPORT STANDARDS

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

SUPPORT STANDARD

5

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

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

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

Support of Teaching and Learning Standards

Standard 5: Leadership and Organization

Conclusions:

The board of education and superintendent ensure that the principal has sufficient autonomy and decision-making authority to lead the school in achieving the mission and expectations for student learning. The principal plays an integral role in the budget process. In the spring of 2009, when there were five teaching positions scheduled to be cut for the 2009-2010 school year, the principal provided strong rationale for keeping four of those positions. The principal has final say regarding school programming and student activities. The board of education demonstrates knowledge of its appropriate role and responsibility and conducts its work accordingly, and the members have confidence in the administration to make appropriate decisions. The board had demonstrated support for the principal's initiation of programs and agenda items. The central office administration sees its role as a facilitator for the programs and ideas brought forth by the building principal. Therefore, supported by the board and superintendent, the principal is able to make appropriate and timely decisions that have a direct and positive impact on the school culture and student learning. (central office administrators, instructional leaders, board of education)

The principal provides leadership in the school community by creating and maintaining a shared vision, direction, and focus for student learning. The principal is continuously seeking feedback from parents, students, and faculty members regarding the vision of the school. He hosts monthly parent advisory meetings, leadership forums with students, and is continuously available to talk to parents, students, or faculty members. When the principal sees a need in a particular department, he works with the instructional leader and assistant principals to move the department forward. The principal uses the school's instructional leaders to develop strategies for

instructional reform. Instructional leaders along with their departments are required to use data to reflect on their practice and inform future decisions by developing strategies to facilitate student progress in meeting the school's academic expectations. As a result, under the principal's leadership all constituent groups are involved in supporting the vision for student learning. (principal, parents, self-study, teachers)

Teachers as well as administrators other than the principal provide leadership essential to the improvement of the school. The two assistant principals have their own responsibilities independent of the principal's. One assistant principal uses her knowledge to create a master schedule that supports the school's mission and has currently been delegated the responsibility of finding a way to effectively implement the school's new grading and attendance program with the school schedule, the other assistant principal leads the organization of school activities and ground maintenance, and this year the principal has given him the charge of working on the school's attendance policy to make it more concise and understandable by all. Teachers are regularly engaged in the writing and revision of curriculum and are actively involved in vertical discussions throughout the district, such as the Math Cadré, to ensure that curriculum is aligned throughout the Plainville school system. Instructional leaders have played an integral role in the data collection and discussion with departments and at leadership summits. The central office administration has provided opportunities for high school instructional leaders to observe teaching practices throughout the district and provide feedback on common understanding of quality instruction. Instructional leaders and departments regularly discuss data from assessments to improve the instruction in their content areas. Therefore, teachers and administrators other than the principal are able to directly impact the improvement of the school. (principal, teachers, instructional leaders, self-study)

The organization and structure of the educational programs promote the school's mission and expectations for student learning. Plainville High School is a comprehensive high school that has a traditional department structure, and each department occupies a certain area of the

building. Each department is led by an instructional leader who is responsible for the course curriculum and department budget. This principal gives departments freedom to make decisions that best support the mission and expectations. Additionally, there are many course offerings in place that show commitment to the academic and civic expectations. As a result, the school's organization and educational programs support student learning. (self-study, program of studies, administrators)

Current student grouping patterns do not reflect the diversity of the student body or foster heterogeneity. The unified arts classes are generally heterogeneous because they are typically offered only at one level. There are some core academic classes that contain both honors and academic level students at the same time, but they are not common. The majority of core content classes are offered at three levels: honors, academic, and standard. Generally, the levels do not represent the school population at-large in regards to gender, free and reduced lunch status, and special education designation. Although 10.4% of the student body at-large has been identified as special education students, 24% of the standard level sophomore English class is special education. Co-teaching exists only for standard level classes. Therefore, the grouping practices do not support the school's aim to prepare students for a diverse, democratic society. (student enrollment data, school strategic profile, observations)

The schedule supports the school's mission and expectations for student learning and effective implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The school schedule is a 6-of-8 period, block rotation. When the school changed from operating with seven instructional periods to eight in 2005, the schedule offered more opportunity to students to enroll in more elective area courses. Each day, students attend six courses for 57 minutes each. The blocks provide teachers with sufficient time to utilize a variety of instructional strategies and teaching practices. The schedule allows the science classes to have their lab and class for two consecutive blocks on the lab day, supporting the academic expectations. Teachers have common planning time 3 times during the 8-day cycle, and many teachers use this time to share resources, discuss

instruction, and conduct peer observations. However, teachers are not provided significant guidance in how to best capitalize on the common planning. As teachers seek out colleagues with whom to share this time, topics of discussion and projects are left up to their discretion. The quantity and frequency of the common planning time is admirable and highly valued by the faculty. Therefore many aspects of the schedule support the mission and expectations. (teachers, assistant principal, instructional leaders)

Meaningful roles in the decision-making process are accorded to students, parents, and all members of the school staff to promote an atmosphere of participation, responsibility, and ownership. All constituents are able to give meaningful voice to discussion through a variety of forums. Faculty and staff members are regularly involved in the decision-making process. The athletic director, grounds supervisor, head custodian, and instructional leaders are all involved in the budget process. When the athletic department needed to make cuts because of lack of budget resources, the athletic director was directly involved in the decision. The administration also promotes opportunities for students, parents, and the community to provide feedback to the school. Students are given voice through student council, the Student Athlete Leadership Team (SALT), and the mentoring program. Students take ownership through serving leadership positions for organizations such as Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA), Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), and the Helping Out Peers Excel (HOPE) program. Members of SALT have assumed positions on the state student council, participating in bi-annual state conferences. Parents are involved in meaningful conversations with teachers, staff members, and administrators through the various parent organizations and through the open-door policy fostered by the administration. They are able to participate in decision-making through the Athletic Backers, parent advisory board, Band Parents, and Project Graduation. Parents were provided the opportunity to provide feedback on the school's mission and expectations in their draft form. Surveys have been given out to parents, teachers, and the community, but they are not completed on a regular, on-going basis. Thus, members of the school community play a

meaningful role in the decision-making process, and all stakeholder groups have a meaningful role that promotes an atmosphere of ownership and participation. (parents, students, administrators, self-study, athletic director)

All but a small number of teachers have a student load that enables him/her to provide sufficient attention to the needs of individual students. The commitment of the school to meet student course requests results in a complex schedule that often ensures appropriate teacher student ratios in all courses. There are many discussions between the administration, instructional leaders, and teachers regarding scheduling and teacher loads. As a result, with limited exceptions, students and teachers generally experience class sizes that are conducive to learning. (student load data, administrators, teachers, observations)

There is a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult member of the school community in addition to the school counselor who personalizes each student's educational experience, knows the student well, and assists the student in achieving school-wide expectations for student learning. The school has recently adopted a mentoring program for all grade levels that has an articulated mission and expectations. Mentor groups meet once per month during the school year. Teachers have been provided a binder of resources to use as part of the program containing suggested activities, but they are also given the freedom to develop the sessions on their own. Not only does the program promote the civic and social expectations, there are suggested sessions that have students discuss the school mission and expectations and what they mean to various members of the school community. Both students and teachers report enjoying this program and the opportunity to connect in a forum outside of the typical classroom setting. As a result, students have members of the school community who know them well and personalize their high school experience in helping them meet their school's mission and expectations. (mentoring handbook, self-study, teachers, students)

The professional staff collaborates informally within and across departments in support of students. Common planning periods built into the schedule provide an opportunity through

which collaboration can take place. Teachers may collaborate both with colleagues who share a common course and as with those who teach outside their area of specialization. The common planning period also provides an opportunity for some teachers who co-teach to develop lesson plans and develop curricula together. Because of this informal collaboration, consistency and alignment in the delivery of assessment and instruction are enhanced in support of student learning. (self-study, teachers, instructional leaders)

Nearly all school staff members are involved in promoting the well-being and learning of students. The custodial staff takes pride in making sure the building is safe and clean and is conducive to a healthy learning environment. The secretarial staff is open and friendly and serves to support both faculty and administration in their interactions with students. Student behavior in the halls is appropriate and orderly due partly as a result of the hall monitor and faculty members making themselves visible and available. Rarely, the support staff does not receive timely communication about issues at the school, leading to some frustration for them as they attempt to respond to questions from students and families. For the most part, however, non-teaching staff members are well integrated into the Plainville High School community and their input is valued and respected. For these reasons, the non-certified staff serves a productive role in ensuring the well-being and learning of students. (students, support staff, guidance)

Student success is regularly acknowledged, celebrated, and displayed. Display cases throughout the building prominently display student work – whether they are artistic or academic. The building is also decorated with permanent student art work, giving students ownership and a sense of belonging. Athletic banners are displayed in the gymnasiums, highlighting team championships going back several decades. Athletic trophies and awards are exhibited in display cases. During morning announcements, the principal publicly acknowledges teams and individual students for their accomplishments -- athletic, academic, artistic, and civic. Students on the honor roll receive a gift from the school, funded by the parent association. The school newspaper, as well as local papers, regularly highlight student successes through press releases put out by the

school. Sports banquets honoring student achievement are held every season, and an awards/scholarship ceremony is held at the end of the year (Night of Excellence) to recognize student academic and civic achievements. Every year, students are inducted into National Honor Society and National Language Honor Society. Thus it is clear that student achievements at Plainville High School are regularly acknowledged and celebrated, and this recognition results in students' sense of belonging and pride. (published school documents, self-study, students, principal)

The climate of the school is safe, positive, respectful, and supportive, resulting in a sense of pride and ownership. Students are generally respectful of each other in the classroom, the corridors, and the cafeteria. All constituent groups in the school consider their involvement in school-life as being part of a family. Students are comfortable interacting with their teachers, and teachers are heavily involved in student life outside of the classroom through coaching and other extracurricular opportunities. The attendance regulation, though somewhat cumbersome, does put an emphasis on the importance of school attendance and is consistent with the school mission. Student discipline is handled primarily by the classroom teachers although serious cases of student misbehavior are referred to the assistant principals who utilize either a detention or in-school suspension to help students take responsibility for their actions – consistent with the school's social and civic expectations. Students demonstrate pride in their school through participation in school activities and attending sporting events, theatrical and music events, as well as through participation in school dances and class competitions and other school-wide activities. Thus, students and teachers alike enjoy and take pride in their school and make a concerted effort to contribute to a sense of group cohesion and satisfaction. (observation of students in corridor and cafeteria, self-study, teacher, principal)

The board of education supports the implementation of the school's mission and expectations for student learning. The board demonstrates an appropriate level of involvement in the implementation and initiation of school policy and programming. Policy decisions are

consistent with the school's mission. The board makes an effort to include many voices as part of their decision-making process – including those of students, two of whom serve as non-voting liaisons to the board. The board looks for input from central office administration as well as building level administration to help inform their decisions. There is synergy and cooperation between the school community and the Plainville community at large.

Commendations:

1. The principal's strong rapport and collaboration with various constituents
2. The involvement of all school staff in promoting the wellbeing of students
3. The various formal and informal ways in which students' successes are celebrated
4. The board of education's support for the school's mission
5. The supportive school climate that instills a sense of pride and ownership in the students, faculty members, and school staff
6. The strategies used by the administrators to include a broad cross-section of the school community in decision-making
7. The administration's creativity and efforts in providing common planning time for teachers

Recommendations:

1. Revise the way in which academic grouping patterns are implemented to ensure that they are reflective of the school population's diversity and provide equity in the educational experience of all students
2. Implement a systematic, planned approach that gives a shared sense of purpose to the teachers' common planning time

SUPPORT STANDARD

6

SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

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

All Student Support Services

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

7. There shall be sufficient certified/licensed personnel and support staff to provide effective counseling, health, special education, and library media services.

Guidance Services

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

Health Services

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

Library Information Services

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

Special Education Services

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

Standard 6: School Resources for Learning

Conclusions

Plainville High School's support services are consistent with the school's mission and expectations for student learning. The support services include a comprehensive guidance program, health services, library media and technology services, and a special education program that supports students with special needs. Library services provide access to a variety of technology and information resources both within and outside the school community. The special education department offers a variety of special education programs that provide equal access to the curriculum for all students at the standard level through modifications and accommodations. In addition the Connections Program offers emotional support to those students identified in need. The range and effectiveness of the school's student support services at Plainville High School is aligned with the mission and expectations of the school, allowing all students to demonstrate success in achieving the expectations. (teachers, parents, students)

The school allocates resources, programs, and services so that all students have an equal opportunity to achieve the school's expectations for student learning. Student support personnel collectively enhance student learning by using freshman academy as a means for school counselors to access their students and convey information regarding credits, graduation requirements, and decision-making. School counselors meet with students at least one time per year and conduct junior and senior interviews where they discuss post high school options and create a plan based on student interests. Students have the option of gaining credits through two on-line programs, the Early College Experience, and the college career pathways program. A full-time library information teacher and one para-professional collaborate with classroom teachers to enable academic success. An after-school homework club in the library information center (LIC) offers students assistance with schoolwork. Therefore, the resources provided support student

learning by providing opportunities for students to learn. (board of education, support services, students, observation, school counselors, self-study)

Student support personnel enhance student learning by interacting and working cooperatively with professional and other staff members and by utilizing community resources to address the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of students. Plainville High School utilizes two on-line educational options; CT Virtual High School and Keystone. Plainville High School also provides opportunities for students to earn college credit while in high school through college and career pathways in conjunction with Tunxis Community College and Early College Experience in conjunction with the University of Connecticut. Through student assistance team meeting (SAM), Plainville High School utilizes the services of Plainville Youth Services volunteer tutors from the community and General Electric. The school counselors and vice principals are divided into houses, allowing support staff to meet weekly and discuss areas of concern. The library information teacher meets with individual classroom teachers and departments to discuss resource and literature needs. She also encourages students to use the Plainville Public Library. Therefore, student learning and opportunities are enhanced through school and community resources. (guidance, parents, support staff, self-study, administrators, school resources committee)

All student support services are informally evaluated and revised to support improved student learning. The library information teacher gives out informal surveys to students who use the library services. The special education department is annually evaluated by the State of Connecticut and bases its modifications on the results of that evaluation. All freshmen are enrolled in freshmen academy and complete an evaluation of that course at the end of semester 1. Adjustments are made to the program based on those results. An overall evaluation of the school counseling program was completed two to three years ago by a consultant from an outside agency, and changes to the program were based on findings of the evaluation. The director of pupil services evaluates the health services annually. While these informal sources of data have

some use, the lack of formal program evaluation may hinder these programs' further development. (school resource committee, school counselors, instructional leaders, students)

Systems for effective and ongoing communications with students, parents, and school personnel are designed to keep them informed about the available student support services and identified student needs. The school counseling and other support service departments communicate with parents through the quarterly guidance newsletter, the school website, the school radio, and Connect Ed, which gives parents the option of communication through e-mail or the phone system and can mass-contact families of students. The morning announcements are used to publicize visiting colleges and upcoming events. If needed, 84.5% of parents reports that they feel comfortable contacting the guidance office. In addition, 80% of the staff feels the nurse adequately keeps them informed of student health concerns. Student learning, support, and opportunities are enhanced as a result of the communication system at Plainville High School. (parents, board of education, Endicott Survey, self-study)

Student records, including health and immunization records, are maintained in a confidential and secure manner consistent with federal and state law. All guidance notes are kept in locked fire-proof filing cabinets located in each counselors office; health records are kept under lock in the health office; students cumulative files are stored in a locked filing cabinet located in the main office, and special education files are kept in a separate locked filing cabinet in a storage closet located off the main office. Therefore, the way in which sensitive files are stored ensures student confidentiality. (administrators, guidance personnel, self-study)

For the most part, Plainville High School has sufficient certified and licensed personnel and support staff members to provide effective counseling, special education, health, and library/media services. The guidance department consists of four certified high school counselors with case loads averaging 245:1, with a reduced caseload of 140:1 for the instructional leader. There is currently one full-time school nurse, six special education teachers, one full-time school psychologist for the general population, and one full-time school psychologist for the

Connections Program with no social workers at the high school level. The library staff consists of one-full time certified library information teacher and one-part time library para-professional who is available during the first five blocks of the day. Teachers are also assigned to assist in the library throughout the week. Therefore, there is sufficient support staff to facilitate the school's mission. (facility tour, standard committee, students, parents, support staff, self-study)

The high school provides a range of comprehensive guidance services including both individual and group meetings for a variety of issues such as personal/social concerns, academic counseling, career planning, course selection, and post-secondary options including college applications. Guidance counselors meet individually with students annually, and that number increases as needs arise; 72.5% of students agrees that they meet with their school counselors at least once a year. During a student's freshman year they are required to participate in the freshman academy course which meets once in the eight-day rotation. Freshman academy is directed by the school counselors and extends across semester one to include topics such as decision-making, career awareness, study skills, learning styles, volunteer opportunities, graduation requirements, and course selection. During a student's junior and senior year, guidance counselors conduct junior/senior interviews. At this meeting, students discuss interests and possible post high school plans, and counselors provide information regarding SATs/PSATs and the college application process. In addition to individual meetings, school counselors conduct a variety of small groups to support the academic, civic, and social expectations of the school. Therefore, the comprehensive guidance program enhances student learning through self-exploration, career planning, and individual and small group work. (students, parents, support staff, guidance personnel)

The school's health services include the provision of preventive health services, direct intervention services, appropriate referrals, mandated services, emergency response mechanisms, and ongoing student health assessments. Preventive and ongoing assessments include vision and scoliosis testing in ninth grade. Parents and staff members have had fast and comprehensive

responses from the school nurse. Therefore, the civic and social expectations for student learning of a healthy lifestyle are enhanced by health service offerings and efficient and comprehensive response by the school nurse. (students, support staff, parents)

The library/information services program and materials are integrated into the curriculum and support the research and curriculum needs of the students and teachers. Students, teachers, and classes actively use the library's resources for their research and information needs. Library purchases are made specifically based upon the recommendations of students and staff members as well as the observations of the library media specialist of what the information needs are for curriculum-based research and inquiry. Collaborative planning between classroom teachers and the library information teacher integrates library resources into the curriculum, supplementing teaching and learning. Therefore, the library media specialist is involved in the creation of curricula through her service on curriculum committees and attendance at department meetings that allow her to assist in this process. (students, self-study, teachers)

The library/information services personnel are knowledgeable about the curriculum and support its implementation through informal processes. The library information teacher collaborates with teachers as they plan assignments, projects, and research tasks to fulfill the demands of the various assignments based on her knowledge of the collection and resources as well as feedback received from students and teachers on the effectiveness of library resources. Through informal discussions with colleagues, requests for materials from teachers, departments, and students as well as through the use of the library's services by students and/or classes, library personnel are able to ensure that adequate resources are available to meet the needs of the school's curricula. The knowledgeable library staff augments the learning experience of students and provides necessary support for the mission and expectations of Plainville High School. (students, self-study, parents)

A wide range of materials, technologies, and other library/information services that are responsive to the school's student population are available to students and faculty members and

are regularly utilized to improve teaching and learning. An extensive collection of online databases supports research. The print and online resources meet the needs of the curriculum and reading levels of the student population. The collection addresses all areas of the curriculum in addition to a number of fiction and high interest non-fiction titles for personal reading selections. A new initiative to download audio books to iPods is being piloted with special education students. The wide range of library services supports and enhances learning in all curricula areas. (self-study, teachers, support staff)

Students and faculty and support staff members have acceptable access to library/information services, facilities, and programs on most days. The resources in the library are available to all students and teachers during the entire day, and the online databases are available to any member of the school community from any computer with Internet access at anytime. There is sufficient space and technology to accommodate simultaneous use of the library information center by a class group and by individuals. Teachers schedule the library information center (LIC) online along with its adjacent computer lab. Lack of a full time para-professional to aid the library information teacher during the last class of the day may limit student's and faculty's access to the services of LIC. (self-study, teachers, support staff)

The library/information services program fosters independent inquiry by enabling students and faculty members to use various school and community information resources and technologies. Teachers report that students are successful on research topics, illustrating their success at independent inquiry. Freshmen participate in an extensive library orientation, learning how to access print information online resources and link to the Plainville Public Library from home. Student must complete technology-based projects that focus on advanced Internet search strategies, web-site evaluation, spreadsheets, and online course work. Subject specific resources are shared with teachers who are encouraged to require students to use a variety of resources when assigning projects. Students are exposed to a variety of sources inside and outside the

school walls, further fostering independent, inquiry-based learning and creating life-long learners.
(teachers, students, self-study)

Policies are in place for the selection and removal of information resources and the use of technologies and the Internet. The materials selection policy contains provisions for selecting library materials and for removing outdated or inaccurate materials. All policies are available on the district webpage and in the LIC. The acceptable use policy and code of conduct regarding computers is in the students' agenda. Faculty and students annually acknowledge their acceptance of the acceptable use policy (AUP), making enforcement of the policy possible.
(teachers, self-study, evidence box)

Plainville High School does two separate approaches for identifying and intervening with students experiencing personal/social and academic difficulties. The school works on a house model, designated the Blue House and the White House. This model allows counselors and administrators to communicate on a regular basis about student concerns. The student assistance team meeting (SAM) is designed to identify students who may be experiencing problems needing clinical intervention. There is a referral form available in the guidance office. Plainville High School is working toward a more comprehensive model of pre-intervention strategies. Sophomores who have struggled with math or reading in their freshmen year have been identified for an additional math or English class which is designed to improve CAPT scores. This is the first year for this intervention, and data determining if it is successful has not yet been collected. Special education teachers are becoming more involved in co-teaching and gaining knowledge of subject curriculum to better support their students. Academic difficulties are identified and discussed during the house meetings which occur on a weekly basis. Therefore, there are adequate systems to identify and provide services to students in need. (standard committee, parents, support staff, observations, principal)

Commendations

1. The beneficial collaboration between student support services personnel, external services, and faculty members to support academic success
2. The library information center's purposeful support of student learning through collaboration with members of the school community
3. The library information center's extensive resources including print and a variety of electronic resources which support the curriculum and learning needs of students

Recommendations

1. Expand student access to the library information center outside of the students' normal class time

SUPPORT STANDARD

7

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

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

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

Standard 7: Community Resources for Learning

Conclusions:

Plainville High School engages parents and families in students' education and encourages their participation in school programs and parent support groups. Various methods are used to apprise parents and families of student learning and school events. Parents are informed via the student-handbook, district and school web-sites, mid-quarter progress reports, quarterly report cards, and parent conferences. Access to progress reports, grades, assignments, homework, and lesson plans is available online through PowerSchool and OnCourse. A quarterly newsletter, automated phone call system, parent e-mail tree, and timely releases to the local newspaper are additional methods of communication used. The principal holds monthly parent forum meetings, and a variety of parent organizations contributes to participation in students' programs and activities. Thus, there are many opportunities for parents and families to be informed of and participate in students' education. (teachers, students, parents, self-study)

Plainville High School fosters productive business/community/higher education partnerships that support student learning. Most of the members of the teaching and learning community in Plainville High School (administrators, teachers, students, and parents) work with some of the businesses in town and community institutions that have an active role in the students' lives. Tunxis Community College (TCC) is actively involved in the school and offers juniors and seniors free college credits through the college career pathways program, and The University of Connecticut has similar involvement through the UConn Early College Experience credit program. Students in the unified arts program produce television and online school athletic events segments, create signs for local business, and participate in projects with the local police department. Consequently, these partnerships have improved teaching and learning at the school and given students a wide range of opportunities to see valid results and applications of their learning in classrooms. (teachers, parents, self-study, observations)

In large part, the school site, plant, and equipment support and enhance most aspects of the educational program and the support services for student learning. The high school facilities have been renovated, providing a very admirable facility to support and enhance the teaching and learning process. Before and during the school renovation, administrators and teachers were consulted for their inputs and needs. Also, the transportation and carpentry labs were not fully included in the renovation plan, resulting in old technology for their sites. Other than these notable exceptions, the facility and grounds support the school's mission. (observations, self-study, facility tour, teachers, school support staff)

The physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with fire, health, and safety regulations. The school renovation was completed in 2008, and all federal and state laws were properly addressed and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety codes, and the certificate of occupancy was given to the school by the building inspection department. The building has also been equipped with a second elevator to make the whole building handicapped accessible. Thus, this renovation has transformed this facility into a safe and comfortable learning environment for students and staff members. (self-study, facility tour, observations, school documentation, director of buildings and grounds, head of maintenance)

Equipment is currently adequate, properly maintained, catalogued, and replaced when appropriate. All equipment is in proper working order at this time, and regular maintenance and replacement schedules are in place. A technology plan is reviewed and updated every three years. There is a web-based work order program called "School Dude" where staff can report their request online, and the maintenance staff handles it generally within 24 hours. During the renovation the school was also provided with a new building management system (TRANE Tracer Summit) which controls all ventilation equipment and monitors air quality. The instructional leader of each department and the administrators coordinate the purchase of supplies. The facilities director and manager are in charge of maintaining and ordering

equipment. Therefore, teaching and learning is enhanced by adequate and properly maintained equipment. (teachers, director of buildings and grounds, observations, head of maintenance, technology director, evidence box)

There is a planned and adequately funded program of building and site management to ensure the appropriate maintenance, repair, and cleanliness of the school plant. Plainville High School has a formal plan and schedule for the maintenance and cleaning of the facility. Supplies and equipment are adequate to provide for appropriate maintenance, repair, and cleanliness of the school plant. Although state-of-the-art maintenance monitoring programs are in place, current understaffing will affect appropriate maintenance, repair, and cleanliness of the facility under certain circumstances. At present, reallocation of staffing and duties has enabled a well-maintained, exemplary facility, but there is concern for unforeseen major needs or emergencies. The school facility is a source of pride for students, staff, faculty, parents, and the community, and all stakeholders are satisfied with the maintenance and cleanliness of the facility. Therefore, although the building and site management is adequately planned and funded to provide for maintenance, repair, and cleanliness of the facility, budget constraints resulting in current understaffing may impact the ability to maintain the building properly. (self-study, teachers, building and grounds director, maintenance director, custodians, observation)

Plainville High School demonstrates ongoing planning to address future program, staffing, facility, and technology needs as well as capital improvements. However, long-range technological equipment maintenance and replacement planning is deficient. In developing the annual school strategic profile, future needs are identified and planning is done to address needs in the areas of programming, staffing, facility, technology, and capital improvement. A three-year educational technology plan for the district is in place. The district develops and implements a ten-year capital projects plan and through the capital projects building committee, needs are identified and addressed in a timely and efficient manner. Ongoing planning to address future program, staffing, facility, and technology needs as well as capital improvements is adequate,

except as related to long-range technological equipment maintenance and replacement planning for future needs. Therefore, the ability of school and community leaders to effectively budget for these needs may be negatively impacted. (self-study, community resources committee, SSP, building and grounds director, IT director, teachers)

The community and the district's governing body currently provide an adequate source of revenue to provide appropriate school programs, personnel, services, facilities equipment, technological support, materials, and supplies for learning. Through support of funding by the community, the newly renovated facility, programs and services, technology, supplies and instructional materials, equipment is adequate at this time. Current funding to maintain appropriate facilities and equipment is adequate. The Plainville Town Capital Projects Building Committee works collaboratively with the school district in support of current needs. There currently is no long-range plan in place for maintenance and replacement of technological equipment and the board of education has expressed the need for long-term planning. Although the community and the district's governing body currently provide an adequate source of revenue, there is no formal assurance of future adequate and dependable sources of revenue to provide and maintain appropriate school programs, personnel, services, facilities, equipment, technological support, materials, and supplies for student learning. (board of education, director of building and grounds and head of maintenance, teachers, self-study, IT director)

Faculty and building administrators have active involvement in the budgetary process, including its development and implementation. Teachers report that they have input in the creation of the budget through collaboration with department instructional leaders. Data about student learning needs in existing courses and any new programs or changes in demographics provide justification for items, considering students' needs in support of the school's mission and expectations for student learning but using a zero-based budget model. After each department's submission to the principal, the principal then prepares a school-wide budget which then goes to the superintendent's office. There is opportunity for discussion at each level and between levels.

The principal and central office administrators develop a district budget that is presented to the board of education. Thus, faculty members and administrators at Plainville High School contribute actively in the development and implementation of the budget process. (teachers, central office personnel, board of education)

Commendations:

1. The exemplary condition of the facility
2. The wide variety of state-of-the-art technology to support curriculum and instruction
3. The valuable opportunities for parents and families to participate in school programs and support groups
4. The establishment by the school of partnerships in the community that support student learning
5. The community's support for the renovation of the school facility
6. The collaborative involvement of faculty and building administrators in the budgetary process

Recommendations:

1. Ensure sufficient personnel and resources to maintain the facility in its present, admirable state
2. Provide technological updates to classrooms not equitably addressed during the building renovation

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 members, administration, and other officials to use to improve the quality of programs and services for the students in Plainville High School. The faculty members, board of education, 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 take place 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 Plainville 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 the school's adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The report of substantive change must describe the change itself and detail any impact which the change has had on the school's ability to meet CPSS Standards. The Commission's Substantive Change Policy is included in the Appendix B on page 79. All other substantive changes should be included in the Two- and Five-Year Progress Reports and/or the Annual Report which is required of each member school to ensure that the Commission office has current statistical data on the school.

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

The visiting committee wishes to extend sincere thanks to the school's faculty members, staff, students, and administrators for making made such thorough preparations for the visit. Accommodations at the school and hotel were perfectly suited to the committee's needs, and when changes were necessary, they were handled very quickly and professionally.

Appendix A: Roster of Team Members

Baker, Lucille	Weston High School	Weston, CT
Berliner, Lisa	Simsbury High School	Simsbury, CT
Costa, Kay (Assistant Chair)	Retired school administrator	Suffield, CT
DelRosario, Pablo	Providence Academy of International Studies	Providence, RI
Dutton, Nancy	Leicester High School	Leicester, MA
Gasper, Anthony (Chair)	East Hampton High School	East Hampton, CT
Giella, Kenneth	RHAM High School	Hebron, CT
Gilbert, Barbara	Colchester board of education	Colchester, CT
Haron, Dan	Darien High School	Darien, CT
Noonan, Christine	North Branford High School	North Branford, CT
Peluso, Joseph	Guilford High School	Guilford, CT
Rodowicz, Myriah	The Morgan School	Clinton, CT
Tipping, Nancy	East Haven High School	East Haven, CT
Wagner-Janssen, Marilyn	Oxford High School	Oxford, CT
Zuraitis, Jeanette	Wilby High School	Waterbury, CT

Appendix B: 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

(9/08)