

**New England Association of
School and Colleges, Inc.**

Commission on Public Schools



Committee on Public Secondary Schools

**Report of the Visiting Team for
Ridgefield High School**

Ridgefield, CT

October 27, 2019 - October 30, 2019

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STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS

THE DISTRIBUTION, USE, AND SCOPE OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT

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

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

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

The Committee on Public Secondary School's Standards for Accreditation serve as the foundation for the accreditation process and by which accreditation decisions are made. The seven Standards are qualitative, challenging, and reflect current research and best practice. The Standards, written and approved by the membership, establish the components of schools to ensure an effective and appropriate focus on teaching and learning and the support of teaching and learning.

Teaching and Learning Standards

Core Values and Beliefs About Learning

Curriculum

Instruction

Assessment of and for Student Learning

Support Standards

School Culture and Leadership

School Resources for Learning

Community Resources for Learning

CORE VALUES, BELIEFS, AND LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

1. The school community engages in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research-based practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning.
2. The school has challenging and measurable 21st century learning expectations for all students which address academic, social and civic competencies. Each expectation is defined by specific and measurable criteria for success, such as school-wide analytic rubrics, which define targeted high levels of achievement.
3. The school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school, drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom, and guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions and resource allocations.
4. The school regularly reviews and revises its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, as well as district and school community priorities.

CURRICULUM

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

1. The curriculum is purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations.
2. The curriculum is written in a common format that includes:
 - units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills
 - the school's 21st century learning expectations
 - instructional strategies
 - assessment practices that include the use of specific and measurable criteria for success, school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics.
3. The curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through:
 - inquiry and problem-solving
 - higher order thinking
 - cross-disciplinary learning
 - authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school
 - informed and ethical use of technology.
4. There is clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum.
5. Effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation exist between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district.
6. Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are sufficient to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities.
7. The district provides the school's professional staff with sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research.

INSTRUCTION

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

1. Teachers' instructional practices are continuously examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations.
2. Teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by:
 - personalizing instruction
 - engaging students in cross-disciplinary learning
 - engaging students as active and self-directed learners
 - emphasizing inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking
 - applying knowledge and skills to authentic tasks
 - engaging students in self-assessment and reflection
 - integrating technology.
3. Teachers adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by:
 - using formative assessment, especially during instructional time
 - strategically differentiating
 - purposefully organizing group learning activities
 - providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom.
4. Teachers, individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices by:
 - using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments
 - examining student work
 - using feedback from a variety of sources, including students, other teachers, supervisors, and parents
 - examining current research
 - engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice.
5. Teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices.

ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT LEARNING

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

1. The professional staff continuously employs a formal process to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations based on specific and measurable criteria for success, such as school-wide analytic rubrics
2. The school's professional staff communicates:
 - individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to students and their families
 - the school's progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to the school community.
3. Professional staff collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement.
4. Prior to each unit of study, teachers communicate to students the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed.
5. Prior to summative assessments, teachers provide students with specific and measurable criteria for success, such as corresponding rubrics, which define targeted high levels of achievement.
6. In each unit of study, teachers employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments.
7. Teachers collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments.
8. Teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work.
9. Teachers regularly use formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning.
10. Teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice, including all of the following:
 - student work
 - common course and common grade-level assessments
 - individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
 - standardized assessments
 - data from sending schools, receiving schools, and post-secondary institutions
 - survey data from current students and alumni.
11. Grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's

core values and beliefs about learning.

SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Support Standard

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

1. The school community consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all.
2. The school is equitable and inclusive, ensuring access to challenging academic experiences for all students, making certain that courses throughout the curriculum are populated with students reflecting the diversity of the student body, fostering heterogeneity, and supporting the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.
3. There is a formal, on-going program(s) or process(es) through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.
4. In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff:
 - engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning
 - use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices
 - dedicate formal time to implement professional development
 - apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
5. School leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning.
6. The organization of time supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students.
7. Student load and class size enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students.
8. The principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations.
9. Teachers, students, and parents are involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership.
10. Teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning.
11. The school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

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

SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Support Standard

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

1. The school has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, that support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.
2. The school provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services.
3. Support services staff use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student.
4. School counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
 - deliver a written, developmental program
 - meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling
 - engage in individual and group meetings with all students
 - deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers
 - use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.
5. The school's health services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
 - provide preventative health services and direct intervention services
 - use an appropriate referral process
 - conduct ongoing student health assessments
 - use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.
6. Library/media services are integrated into curriculum and instructional practices and have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
 - are actively engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum
 - provide a wide range of materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum
 - ensure that the facility is available and staffed for students and teachers before, during, and after school
 - are responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning
 - conduct ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.
7. Support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners, have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
 - collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations
 - provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students

- perform ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Support Standard

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

1. The community and the district's governing body provide dependable funding for:
 - a wide range of school programs and services
 - sufficient professional and support staff
 - ongoing professional development and curriculum revision
 - a full range of technology support
 - sufficient equipment
 - sufficient instructional materials and supplies.
2. The school community develops, plans, and funds programs:
 - to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant
 - to properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment
 - to keep the school clean on a daily basis.
3. The community funds and the school implements a long-range plan that addresses:
 - programs and services
 - enrollment changes and staffing needs
 - facility needs
 - technology
 - capital improvements.
4. Faculty and building administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget.
5. The school site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services.
6. The school maintains documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations.
7. All professional staff actively engage parents and families as partners in each student's education and reach out specifically to those families who have been less connected with the school.
8. The school develops productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning.

School and Community Summary

School and Community Summary

Ridgefield High School (RHS) located in Ridgefield, Connecticut, exclusively serves students whose families reside there. The town is located in Southwest Connecticut, in Fairfield County, and is approximately 50 miles from New York City, rendering it commuter-convenient to that large metropolitan center. According to the Connecticut Economic Research Center's (CERC) 2018 town profile of Ridgefield has an approximate population of 23,000, and, given the median household income is \$145,014, Ridgefield is considered an affluent community with median home prices listed at \$673, 900. The CERC town profile identified the following demographic information relating to race/ethnicity: 88.5 percent White Alone, Non-Hispanic, 0.9 percent Black Alone, 2.6 percent Asian, 0.02 percent Native American, 5.2 percent Hispanic or Latino, and 2.5 percent Other/Multi-Race.

According to the Ridgefield Tax Collector's Office, the 2019-2020 approved town budget is \$147,825,683, with 98,193,760 supporting the education system, which represents 66.4 percent of the total resources. According to the Connecticut School Finance Project from the 2017-2018 school year, Ridgefield's per-pupil average spending is \$18,581, which is 8.9 percent higher than Connecticut's average per-pupil spending of \$16,988. The Ridgefield Public Schools have the lowest per-pupil spending compared to comparable (DRG-A) schools, which range between \$20-21K per student per year.

During the 2018-2019 school year, the total student enrollment district-wide was 4,885 students; these students were educated in six elementary schools, two middle schools, one alternative high school, a program for 18-to-21-year-old students with special education needs, and at RHS. One of the six elementary schools in the district offers pre-kindergarten, while the rest start at kindergarten; all six elementary schools serve students through fifth grade. The two middle schools in the district educate students in grades six through eight. Additionally, there are two non-public schools in the district, St. Mary School and Ridgefield Academy, both of which serve students from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade.

RHS's 2018-2019 enrollment for students in grades nine through twelve was 1,631; in terms of gender, this total enrollment figure breaks down to 796 males and 835 females. RHS's 2018-2019 enrollment represents a slight downward trend in enrollment over the past several years. For example, there are 127 fewer students enrolled in the 2018-2019 school year than in the 2014-2015 school year. This reduction in enrollment was expected as enrollment has decreased in district feeder schools. The racial, ethnic, and class compositions of RHS students closely reflect the district-wide profile; of note, 3 percent of students at RHS qualify for free and reduced lunch, and 2.8 percent of Ridgefield residents live below the poverty line.

In 2018-2019, RHS had 138 teachers, representing a student-teacher ratio of 11.8:1. The average class size is 17.7 students, while the average teacher has 83 students on their course load. Over the past three years, the average attendance rate among teachers, excluding professional days, is 96.2 percent. Students are in school for 181 days with a total of 1,003 hours of potential instruction. Graduation requirements and total credits required equals 25 total credits, including 4 credits in English, 4 credits in mathematics, 3.5 credits in social studies, 3 credits in science, 2 credits in world languages, 1.5 credits in career/life skills, 1 credit in STEM, 1 credit in PE, 1 credit in health and wellness, and 1 credit in fine arts. For 2023 graduating students, the graduation requirements will change to reflect the following credit breakdown: 25 total credits, reflecting 9 credits needed in the humanities (including 4 English and 2.5 social studies), 9 credits needed in STEM (including 3 science and 3 math), 1 credit in PE, 1 credit in health and wellness and 1 credit in world languages.

The RHS athletics department currently consists of thirty-three varsity sports across the three competitive seasons (fall, winter, and spring). Between varsity, JV, and freshman levels, there are seventy-three teams. In the 2017-2018 school year, a total of 940 unique athletes competed in at least one sport. When taking into account the multi-sport athletes, there were a total of 1,561 athletes on eligibility lists for the year. RHS has a wide array of clubs available for students to pursue current interests or try something new. Students can choose from over forty clubs, such as Mock Trial, Art, and Media Club, Environmental Sustainability Club, Robotics Team, Unity Club, Gay Straight Alliance, and the Investment & Innovation Club. Playing in a sport or participating in the spring musical does not preclude students from also signing up for one or more clubs. Students can join a club mid-year or put their club membership on hiatus. Although there is a faculty advisor to guide club members,

it is the students themselves who promote the club to prospective new members and encourage ongoing participation.

Over 90 percent of RHS students graduate and attend college. RHS students have the opportunity to take college-level courses through Advanced Placement coursework and/or the University of Connecticut's Early College Experience (ECE) concurrent enrollment program; presently, 83 percent of twelfth-grade students take advantage of such opportunities. Additionally, the high school reports that 93 percent of 11th grade students met the benchmark for the English/Reading/Writing college readiness exam and 81 percent met the benchmark for the math college readiness exam during the 2018-2019 school year.

The RHS Career and Technical Education (CTE) Department, along with the RHS Business and Family and Consumer Sciences Departments, organized and hosted the 2nd Annual CTE Symposium in the spring of 2019. The CTE Symposium was the result of the different departments partnering with businesses in the Ridgefield area. It showcased the ongoing work that students in various classes completed for community businesses. For example, students in a marketing course worked on a marketing campaign for one of the Ridgefield Playhouse's shows and students in culinary courses worked on new menu items for Hoodoo Brown's Barbeque Restaurant in Ridgefield. The CTE Symposium also invited business leaders from the community and had them engage with students in a speed-networking activity. Students had the opportunity to meet with community members, practice interview skills, and ask questions about the industries. There were also various workshops held by community members, during which students learned about different industries, careers, and pathways necessary to follow in order to be successful in the particular field.

RHS's visual and performing arts (VPA) department partners annually with the Aldrich Museum's National Portfolio Day coordinating college presentations at the high school and portfolio evaluation from top-tier art colleges at the Aldrich in the evening of the same day. The VPA department also works closely in a joint effort with the Ridgefield Arts Council in coordination of the Career in the Arts Day. Career professionals from varied visual and performing arts professions volunteer their time discussing their respective fields of work with RHS students. The Ridgefield community is invited to attend and participate in both events.

In May of each year, for about four-to-five weeks, 12th grade students are given the opportunity to participate in the RHS Senior Internship Program. The program offers seniors the opportunity to explore and participate in a career of interest instead of attending classes. Twelfth grade students work in businesses in Ridgefield and in surrounding towns. Industries include financial services, sports marketing, real estate, and banking. For example, there were student interns at Alpine Woods Capital Investment, Barnburner Sports Marketing, and Smartrevenue. Many students also choose to work in the food industry, fashion, and early childcare education. Students worked at various RPS elementary schools in the area, Bareburger Restaurant, Golden Touch, The Pizza Truck Company, and the Enchanted Garden Dance Studio.

RHS students receiving specialized education services participate in community-based vocational training at over twenty local businesses. These sites allow hands-on training in a community-based setting where students learn transferable skills that will one day allow them to achieve their vocational goals. Students also access local restaurants, gyms, businesses, etc. to conduct training in activities of daily living on a weekly basis. These businesses welcome staff and students, allowing them the space and time to train for a student's specific routines and also to foster skill generalization. The Boys and Girls Club of Ridgefield is an integral community partner for RHS. As an employer, they accept students with special needs and students who are typically developing in paid and unpaid positions. Students participate in their Keystone Program. Additionally, during the summer, students are offered vocational training in Leaders in Training (LIT) Program, as well as engaging in social-skills training opportunities for any who require extended-school-year services.

The RHS Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) is a partner with the high school. The organization supports the school in numerous ways, including their "gifts to school" and "mini-grants for teachers and clubs;" providing food at orientations, RHS Open House, and award ceremonies; offering organizational and logistical support when needed and presentations for parents; serving on committees; and supporting the district/school budgets each year.

The Ridgefield Police Department (RPD) partners with RHS on an annual basis through its Government of Ridgefield Against Drunk Driving (GRADD) assembly and GRADD Flag Raising Ceremony for seniors. In addition, the RPD was a resource during the two planned student walkouts, one of which was the National

School Walkout protesting gun violence in schools initiated and organized by RHS students, by voluntarily providing police officers for safety and security.

There are two formal non-profit organizations that support the athletics program at the high school. The first, Tiger Hollow Inc., was formed in the late 1990's to complete a renovation to the existing athletic facilities at that time. It has continued to operate primarily as a fundraising entity that completes large capital improvements to the athletics facility at Tiger Hollow that would otherwise not be possible. They operate under the mindset of "By the community, for the community" and have been instrumental in the purchase and installation of two completely lit multi-sport artificial turf fields, three sets of bleachers, a "pavilion" that houses bathrooms, a press box/office, locker rooms and a weight room and other smaller improvements to the facility. The second organization is the Athletics Advisory Council (AAC). Similar to Tiger Hollow Inc., the AAC operates primarily as a fundraising organization that supports the athletics department through purchases that otherwise may not be possible. Unlike Tiger Hollow Inc., the AAC focuses on all other athletic facilities besides Tiger Hollow. Improvements over the years that have been partially funded by the AAC include a motorized batting cage in the gym for use by the baseball and softball programs, improvements to the pool facility at the Barlow Mountain Pool, sound system purchases for the main and auxiliary gyms, and improvements to the varsity softball field at the high school.

RHS partners with the state's flagship university, The University of Connecticut, to offer concurrent enrollment courses that earn RHS students credits toward high school graduation and a college transcript for coursework in which they earn higher than a C-. RHS currently offers almost 200 different courses for students including seven dual-enrollment courses at RHS. RHS has also coordinated with other surrounding schools to provide our students with alternatives for education. These schools and opportunities include Ridgefield Alternative High School, the Academy of Information Technology and Engineering, the Center for Global Studies, Henry Abbott Regional Technical High School, Westhill High School Regional Vocational Agricultural Center, Norwalk Community College High School Partnership Program, and the Academy of the Performing Arts/Regional Center for the Arts. Additionally, Western CT Regional Adult and Continuing Education (WERACE) also offers afternoon and evening classes for a credit diploma program for students 16 years and older who have withdrawn from school. RHS offers multiple pathways of learning for students. Credits can be earned through the completion of approved online courses, through college courses taken at approved higher education institutions, through independent study options, and through a partnership with Danbury High School's JROTC Program.

RHS reports a high rate of daily attendance (95.6 percent) and a low dropout rate (0.08 percent over the past three years). RHS graduation rates, 95.4 percent for the past three years, are well above the state average of 87.4 percent, according to the last available ct.gov reporting data from 2016. From the class of 2018, 90 percent of students attended four-year colleges/universities and 2 percent of students attended two-year colleges.

Each marking period, RHS designates students who have met honor-roll criteria (high honors of 3.9 or higher and honors of 3.4 to 3.89). While RHS does not use class rank, there is a valedictorian of each graduating class. Annually, RHS holds two formal recognition programs. The Junior Book Award program, which extended fifty awards in 2018-2019, recognizes 11th graders for excellence, either by criteria set by the college or university that sponsors the award, or via merit, that is identified by the RHS Awards Committee, comprised of 11th grade social studies teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators. The Senior Awards Night for 12th graders is when academic awards that recognize students' outstanding contribution to, passion for, or performance in a discipline or club, and scholarships are conferred. In 2018-2019, 188 awards were given.

There are numerous athletic department awards that are given out over the course of each school year to individual student-athletes. Within the school, varsity athletes who meet the team criteria for varsity letters are awarded a letter and sport pin at the conclusion of the season. Multi-sport/season varsity letter winners receive an additional pin for each letter earned. All athletes receive a certificate of participation at the conclusion of the season and each program gives up to six team awards (e.g. most valuable player and most improved) and typically include a Tiger Pride award at sub-varsity levels. At the league level, individual athletes may receive recognition as All-FCIAC athletes based on performance and/or votes by league coaches. Additionally, two Ridgefield athletes (one male and one female) are nominated and recognized as FCIAC Exemplary Scholar-Athletes each season based on their performances both in school and in athletics. Other individual recognition of scholar-athletes happens at the state and national levels through various organizations. From a team standpoint, varsity teams compete for FCIAC Championships in most sports as well as CIAC Championships. Over the past two years (2016-2017 and 2017-2018) teams have compiled eight FCIAC Division titles, six FCIAC Champion titles, and won five CIAC State Championships.

Core Values, Beliefs and Learning Expectations

Ridgefield High School

Mission

Our educational community strives to cultivate a highly engaging and personalized learning environment that encourages individual growth, resilience, citizenship, and empathy.

21st Century Learning Expectations:

1. Exploring and Understanding,
2. Solving Problems,
3. Creating and Constructing,
4. Conveying Ideas,
5. Using Communication Tools, and
6. Collaborating Strategically.

Ridgefield Public Schools

Mission

Ridgefield Public Schools provides engaging, relevant, and personalized learning experiences so all students can pursue their interests and prepare for life, learning, and work as global citizens.

To accomplish this mission, our community including educators, students, and parents will partner to:

- Foster academic, social, and emotional growth for all students.
- Promote wellness of body and mind.
- Build an inclusive climate of trust, safety, and respect.
- Value diversity by cultivating global competencies.
- Attract, support, and retain talented educators who embrace continuous learning.

RPS Vision of a successful graduate

Collaborative

Graduates who are collaborative contribute cooperatively and responsibly to a team when they are looking for solutions to rigorous and complex problems.

Innovative

Graduates who are innovative find creative solutions to authentic problems. They think flexibly and critically while gathering information to synthesize and apply what they have learned.

Mindful

Graduates who are mindful embrace empathy and advocate respect for themselves and others. Through self reflection and awareness, they understand diverse cultures and perspectives. They model the conviction that ethics, leadership, and service to others are critical elements of responsible citizenship.

Communicative

Graduates who are communicative strategically navigate, construct, and articulate specific messages. They utilize their communication skills in an effective, clear and precise manner across multiple forms of media literacy.

Knowledgeable

Graduates who are knowledgeable are independent learners who draw upon a wide range of skills for different purposes. They seek, gather and critique information from a variety of sources.

Resilient

Graduates who are resilient are adaptable and persistent in their journey toward growth on rigorous and complex problems. They embrace failure and are intellectual risk-takers. They are self-motivated, thoughtful and independent decision-makers who value lifelong learning.

Introduction

Introduction

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

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

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

Teaching and Learning Standards

Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

Curriculum

Instruction

Assessment of and for Student Learning

Support of Teaching and Learning Standards

School Culture and Leadership

School Resources for Learning

Community Resources for Learning

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

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit - The School Self-Study

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At Ridgefield High School, a committee of 10 members, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned 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 students and parents. The Steering Committee was comprised of nine faculty members from across the content areas and the school's principal. The Standard Subcommittees were comprised primarily of faculty members, but each Standard Subcommittee included one student, one parent, and at least one administrator and/or professional staff member.

The self-study of Ridgefield High School extended over a period of eight school months from October 11, 2018 to May 2, 2019. The visiting team was pleased to note that seven students and seven parents joined the

professional staff in the self-study deliberations.

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

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

The Process Used by the Visiting Team

A visiting team of 16 members was assigned by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate Ridgefield High School. The visiting team members spent four days in Ridgefield, reviewed the self-study documents which had been prepared for their examination, met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students and parents, shadowed students, visited classes, and interviewed teachers to determine the degree to which the school aligns with the Committee's Standards for Accreditation. Since the members of the visiting team represented classroom teachers, guidance counselors, library/media specialists, school administrators, and central office administrators, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Ridgefield High School.

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

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

Each conclusion in the report was agreed to by visiting team consensus. Sources of evidence for each conclusion drawn by the visiting team are included with each Indicator in the Standards sections of the report. The seven Standards for Accreditation reports include commendations and recommendations that in the visiting team's judgment will be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning and to better align with Committee Standards.

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

Standard 1 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The majority of Ridgefield High School's (RHS) school community members engaged in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research-based practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about 21st century learning expectations.

Beginning in 2012-2013, RHS began its engagement in an elaborate process to examine and revise the mission statement and core values with all stakeholders (i.e., central office administration, building administration, board of education, teachers, support staff, parents, and students), including reviewing research by Heidi Hayes Jacobs, Grant Wiggins & Jay McTigue, Tony Wagner, John Hattie, Allison Zmuda, and James Rickabaugh. In 2016, a Strategic Coherence Planning Committee formed at the district level to create a research-based district vision of the graduate, which was the driving force behind the development of the mission and core value statements across the district. Based on input from the various stakeholders, the mission statement and core values statements underwent multiple revisions prior to being finalized. Conversations with teachers, parents, and students, during committee meetings, indicate that each group feels as though they had an equitable voice in revising the mission statement, core values, and learning expectations, which has led to tremendous buy-in from the entire community.

According to the Endicott survey, 84 percent of students agree that they are familiar with the school's core values and beliefs about learning, 86 percent of parents agree that they are familiar with the core values and beliefs adopted by the school, 75 percent of parents agree that they are familiar with the 21st century learning expectations adopted by the school (academic, social, and civic), and 72 percent of parents agree that the school's core values and beliefs represent what the community values about student learning. Furthermore, teachers, parents, and students provided examples demonstrating that the mission statement and core beliefs are at the heart of the many decisions made regarding student learning. For example, when requesting funding for new initiatives or programs from the board, the proposal must directly state how the initiative or program supports the school mission statement and core values in order to be considered. New curriculum is in the process of being specifically designed with the core values in mind, and some conversations with students indicate that the connection between particular lessons and the mission statement and/or core values is explicitly explained to students.

As a result of the district's and school's inclusiveness of all community stakeholders in developing the school's mission statement and core values, the community has tremendous endorsement of and involvement in upholding and incorporating the mission statement and core values in daily educational practices with the goal of adequately preparing the whole child to successfully enter the adult world post-graduation.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school board
- department leaders
- Endicott survey

Standard 1 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The school community at Ridgefield High School (RHS) has developed and implemented challenging and somewhat measurable learning expectations for all students that address academic, social, and civic competencies. Expectations are somewhat defined by specific and measurable criteria for success, which define targeted high levels of achievement.

RHS has delineated six learning expectations: exploring and understanding, solving problems, creating and constructing, conveying ideas, using communication tools, and collaborating strategically. A committee of teachers and administrators developed an analytical rubric to measure the identified learning expectations. However, it is still in the pilot phase and is being inconsistently implemented across disciplines and with individual teachers.

Furthermore, the six clearly identified 21st century learning expectations are distinct from the identified core values: collaboration, knowledge, innovation, resilience, mindfulness, and communication. The posters found in all classrooms identify the school's mission and list the core values, without any reference to the 21st century learning expectations. Most students and teachers could cite several of the core values, but few were able to identify the 21st century learning expectations. This confusion amongst the school community was evident in conversations with students, teachers, support staff, parents, building administrators, and central office administrators. The school community uses the school's identified core values interchangeably with their learning expectations, replacing the learning expectations with the core values with high frequency. While the school-wide analytical rubric is not used regularly, teachers and department chairs frequently use department and assignment specific teacher-designed rubrics to address the learning expectations and some of the core values. The analytical school-wide rubric adequately measures some of the learning expectations and includes language directly from the core values: knowledge, innovation, collaboration, and communication. Mindfulness is somewhat measured on the analytical rubric, but resiliency is not measured at all. Members of the entire school community noted the need to create a civic and social rubric to quantifiably measure growth in these two areas.

When the school community definitively selects the core values and learning expectations and develops a means of measuring those values and expectations, teachers and students will have clear learning targets.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- students
- parents
- community members
- central office personnel
- school leadership

Standard 1 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Ridgefield High School's core values and beliefs are actively reflected in the culture of the school, drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in most classrooms, and guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations.

RHS's core values and beliefs are integral to and reflected in the school culture. All school classrooms and offices contain the mission statement and core values, and that information that is readily accessible to faculty, students, and parents. According to the Endicott survey results, a majority of students, parents, and staff feel that they are familiar with RHS's core values and beliefs: students report 84 percent agreement, parents agree at 86 percent, and staff at 87 percent. The student-centered student life office invites students to create clubs that reflect specific interests, which are linked directly to the mission statement and core values on the application form. RHS embeds its core values into the culture through various special events and assemblies. A few examples include the monthly student-principal forum, What's Up Doc?, mock election for students of American government and politics, and the annual Anti-Defamation League's day-long workshop and assembly. In addition, RHS French students host students from France for a two-week period. These students will have the opportunity to travel to France in April 2020.

Going forward, all new curricula and course proposals are required to directly align with the mission statement and core values. According to the Endicott survey, 80 percent of teachers report they use these expectations to drive learning at the classroom level. Instructional strategies are also reflective of the school's core values and learning expectations. In some classes, self-directed learning, student collaboration, and higher order thinking are common.

The RHS mission statement and core values are considered when making policy decisions and resource allocations. Teachers, students, and parents describe both curricular and non-curricular programs and workshops on resilience, mindfulness, and communications. For example, the PTSA sponsors Project Resilience and Family Facetime. According to the Endicott survey, 70 percent of staff agree that the school's core values and beliefs about learning guide decisions related to policies, procedures, and resource allocation. The outcomes of all approved professional development must align with the core values and learning expectations. For budget expenditures to be approved, they also must align with the mission statement and core values.

Because the core values and beliefs are frequently reflected in the culture, drive classroom learning, purposefully guide the school's policies, all students are provided opportunities to achieve at high levels. When the school's 21st century learning expectations are as clearly embraced as are the school's core values, students will have a more complete understanding of the skills they are expected to master.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school board
- department leaders

- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 1 Indicator 4

Conclusions

Ridgefield High School (RHS) does not have a formal plan for regularly reviewing and revising its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations.

The school reports that the current mission statement and core values will be reviewed in two to three years, with possible minor revisions, and then again in five years with more scrutiny. Furthermore, the school community uses the core values as their learning expectations, often using the two terms interchangeably. Given that the school has very recently just finished revising its mission statement and core values, and the Ridgefield Board of Education has yet to develop policy and practices around the district's vision of the graduate, the school leadership team is not at a point where it can make a formal plan, leaving team members to rely on informal guarantees by the current principal.

When a formal plan to review and revise the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations, based on research, multiple data sources, and district and school community priorities, is developed and implemented, Ridgefield High School will have the means to ensure ongoing ownership and buy-in by all stakeholders.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 1 Commendations

Commendation

The extensive, highly collaborative and inclusive process, informed by current research-based best practices to identify and commit to the school's core values and beliefs about learning

Commendation

The active reflection of the school's core values and beliefs in the culture of the school

Commendation

The use of the core values and beliefs in driving curriculum, instruction, and assessment as well as for guiding the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations

Commendation

The process to identify and commit to the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations, which included all stakeholders

Commendation

The adaptation of school policies, procedures, and decisions that actively reflect the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations

Commendation

The transparent acknowledgment for the need of a formal revision plan of the school's mission statement, core values, beliefs, and learning expectations

Commendation

Commendation

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Commendation

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Standard 1 Recommendations

Recommendation

Ensure that each of the school's 21st century learning expectations is defined by specific and measurable criteria for success, such as school-wide analytic rubrics, which define targeted high levels of achievement

Recommendation

Develop and implement a process for the review and revision of the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations

Recommendation

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Standard 2 Indicator 1

Conclusions

Some curriculum is purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve the district's vision of the graduate goals, defined as "the skills and characteristics a student needs to successfully implement the knowledge they have acquired in school."

The district recently developed a curriculum template based on Wiggins and McTighe's Understanding by Design (UBD) model. This template requires the identification of a "vision of the graduate goal" for each unit, in addition to identifying standards, essential understandings, essential questions, content, skills, assessments, authentic complex problems, evaluative criteria, and a learning plan. Specific references to 21st century learning expectations are replaced with "vision of the graduate goal" in this iteration of Ridgefield's district curriculum development template. The template is new, with implementation beginning in the summer of 2019. Some teachers in some departments such as math, English, and social studies have received training and have begun writing curriculum units using the new template.

When all curriculum is purposefully designed to ensure that students have opportunities to practice and achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations/vision of the graduate, students will have consistent opportunities to practice and achieve all of the school's 21st century learning expectations/vision of the graduate.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- teacher interview
- students
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 2 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Some of the curriculum is written in the district's recently developed common template that includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills; instructional strategies; and assessment practices that include the use of specific and measurable criteria for success, such as school-wide analytic or course-specific rubrics.

Most curriculum units are written in an older format that identifies essential questions and content and may identify standards, big ideas, and skills. Few of these older units make reference to assessment or instructional strategies. The new curriculum writing template is available to all departments in a shared Google Drive. The K-12 humanities coordinator and K-12 STEM coordinator, as well as the department chairs, are available to guide departments through curriculum development as they align to this new common format. In the summer of 2019, curriculum for 21 existing courses and five newly approved courses was written using the new template. The district has developed a five-year curriculum revision cycle to ensure the ongoing review and revision of the curriculum.

When all RHS curriculum is completed using the new curriculum writing template with an emphasis on student achievement of the 21st century learning skills/vision of the graduate, teachers will have the tools that they need in order to ensure that all students are able to practice and achieve the school's vision of the graduate goals.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teachers

Standard 2 Indicator 3

Conclusions

The taught curriculum frequently emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through inquiry and problem-solving, higher order thinking, authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school, and informed and ethical use of technology, but opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning are limited.

Project-based performance tasks in robotics, Project Lead the Way, Marketing, AP Government, and Science Research demonstrate opportunities for student engagement in inquiry and problem-solving. In addition, the use of stations with authentic practice problems in statistics also incorporates problem-solving into the practiced curriculum. Projects in a Latin course demonstrate higher order thinking as students are tasked with making a connection between the ancient societal impacts of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius to a modern issue that can be compared and contrasted for its societal impact. The American Studies course requires students to define an American using three pieces of textual support. Higher order thinking is also evident in a chemistry assignment requiring students to make connections between specific elements and their relevance in society including medicine, industry, and technology.

The Science Research course provides opportunities for students to participate in authentic learning both in and out of school. Students are afforded the opportunity to select a topic of interest, perform research using peer-reviewed journal articles, and contact authors and professionals in the related field as they identify an inquiry-based question to investigate using authentic data collection. Students develop a portfolio of their work over time from semester to semester as they network and collaborate with expert mentors. Some students travel to work with their mentors on their independent research projects for data collection. Chemistry personalizes learning for students by incorporating student choice into an assignment on elements. Students choose from a variety of formats including painting, designing comic strips, developing super-heroes, writing children's books, and producing videos as their final product. The Health and Ethics course provides students with the opportunity to explore life from birth to death and to care for a simulated child. The music department installed a music lab for students to use in practicing and generating authentic music productions. Family and consumer science classes simulate the Food Network show "Cupcake Wars" as students compete in who can create the best cupcake based on specified criteria. Special education students in the RISE program participate in vocational placement opportunities as they strive to develop essential skills for their future. AP Art students are afforded the opportunity to collaborate with professionals at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum as they review student portfolios.

Informed and ethical use of technology is evident in practice at RHS. The district has been working toward a one-to-one Chromebook implementation beginning in the lower grades where students have had explicit and detailed instruction on digital citizenship. These lessons are reinforced by the RHS library/media specialists along with classroom teachers who emphasize academic reliability of online sources, issues of plagiarism, and the importance of citing sources. Advisory lessons address social media, issues of cyber-bullying, and the importance of curating one's digital presence. Over 87 percent of students and 70 percent of parents believe that students are knowledgeable about the ethical use of technology. Classrooms are equipped with technology including for example SMARTBoards, Chromebooks, and projectors. Teachers are comfortable with using the available technology provided to them. For example, a business teacher and students used technology to access resources provided in Google Classroom and to perform additional research for a project. Social studies students used technology to perform research on an assignment and the teacher used the technology to project video clips.

Cross-disciplinary learning is limited at RHS. The American Studies course provides students with a combined experience with English and social studies as units for each discipline are integrated into one where standards for each are assessed simultaneously. The business department has created a cross-disciplinary opportunity for students enrolled in Sports Marketing and Computer Apps courses. The sports marketing students choose two products to compare and contrast such as Peloton and NordicTrack stationary bikes. Computer apps students then design a survey app using the assignment rubric from the Sports Marketing course for the audience to use during project presentations in rating the products.

Because of the emphasis on depth of understanding and application through inquiry and problem-solving, higher order thinking, authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school, and the informed and ethical use of technology, students have many opportunities to learn and apply knowledge to complex problems both in and outside of school. When the school increases opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning, students will increase their abilities to link concepts and skills in approaching complex problems.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- department leaders
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 2 Indicator 4

Conclusions

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

Currently, departments meet informally and sometimes formally during monthly meeting times, during free periods, and after school for purposes of collaborating on issues of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Teachers are occasionally given time during designated professional development days to align their curricula and develop their lessons. Periodic collegial walk-throughs are conducted, and supervisory classroom observations also monitor the consistency of written and taught curriculum. Lesson plans are reviewed by department chairs, and teaching practices are evaluated by peers and administrators. Common assessments in Algebra II, Pre-Calculus, and Geometry courses are used and regularly reviewed to pinpoint gaps in the curriculum. World Languages teachers of the same course meet regularly, albeit informally, to share ideas about delivering the curriculum. By design, structures are in place to ensure that the written curriculum is taught. Department chairs supervise teachers and provide assistance. In addition, there are two K-12 curriculum coordinators in humanities and STEM. The assistant superintendent created a five-year cycle, in which all departments will implement a formally revised curriculum that began in the summer of 2019.

Because of the formal and informal structures in place to ensure the alignment between the written and taught curriculum, students have equal opportunity to practice and achieve the school's learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- teachers
- students
- school support staff

Standard 2 Indicator 5

Conclusions

Curricular coordination informally exists within most departments and vertical articulation informally exists in a very limited number of departments between the two sending middle schools and RHS.

Vertical articulation with sending schools is attempted in the district via the use of a shared Google drive that stores curriculum. However, access to all teachers appears to be limited at this point and collaboration on vertical articulation is limited. Teachers between grade levels do not have formalized collaborative time to articulate curriculum vertically. However, the recent implementation of the STEM and humanities coordinator positions provide opportunities for the district to improve the curricular coordination and vertical articulation between and among academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district. The math department has implemented structures that more effectively support collaborative processes in horizontal alignment and curriculum design through the creation of professional learning communities (PLCs). Teachers are provided with department meeting time and professional development time weekly on Thursday afternoons to work together to ensure vertical alignment of curriculum grades nine through twelve. The Thursday afternoon "professional hour" is cited as an opportunity for curricular coordination, but most teachers and administrators agree that there are many competing agenda items for the time. All acknowledge that school-wide time during the school day is not formally scheduled, adding that occasionally teachers of like courses have the same preparation period and are able to meet for collaboration if they choose. Departments also have common office spaces that enable informal "on the fly" collaboration.

When the school and district provide effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district, there will be a clear understanding of the continuum of student learning in the district and how it will culminate in the high school experience.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 2 Indicator 6

Conclusions

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

Teachers and administrators report adequate funding is allocated to instructional materials, technology, equipment and supplies, and library/media resources. Curriculum requests for funding are based on priority and on an as-needed basis for all departments. According to the Endicott survey, 82 percent of students and 83 percent of parents believe that funding is adequate for their needs. Library/media specialists report adequate funding for print and non-print resources to fully implement the curriculum, and funding is available and systematically budgeted to allow for updated resources. The library learning commons (LLC) resources adequately support the curriculum with supplemental material as well as computers to support research. Some highlights include authors as guest speakers to discuss writing process and to meet with reading classes, host space on RHS Latin Day for Latin classes, showcase in Mark Twain room for robotics murph-bots, Gale database access, assistance in the creation and facilitation of 13 class escape rooms using Breakout Edu for social studies, math, English, and Latin. The LLC also provides new puzzles every month as a way for students to relax, de-stress, and collaborate. Additionally, library/media specialists have met with six disciplines departmentally in the last year, and have provided over 75 in-person teacher consults. Library/media specialists at RHS provide remarkable support guides for students created to support independent research assigned by classroom teachers including a nuclear chemistry project, the Great Light Debate, UCONN ECE research project, American values in mythology and in the Bible.

RHS also has a wide variety of co-curricular and extracurricular offerings. The student life office (SLO), is overseen by a 0.6 FTE student life coordinator, and the office is staffed during the school day by two full-time employees who plan and coordinate all extracurricular activities, including student government, school-wide events, clubs, and sports. Clubs and activities are fully funded by the district, but athletics operates on a partial pay-to-play basis.

Because staffing, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, library resources are sufficient in order to fully implement the curriculum, including co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities, students are challenged to continually pursue personal excellence.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- facility tour
- students
- Endicott survey
- school website

Standard 2 Indicator 7

Conclusions

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

Department leaders, along with the K-12 STEM coordinator and K-12 humanities coordinator work collaboratively in conjunction with the assistant superintendent to facilitate the ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum. However, this work is in its infancy, with the implementation of the new curriculum template beginning in the summer of 2019. At the district level, central office staff including the superintendent and the assistant superintendent oversee the STEM coordinator and the humanities coordinator. However, stability of leadership positions in central office in recent years has been inconsistent. The current superintendent is in her second iteration of filling in as interim superintendent, and the assistant superintendent responsible for curriculum is newly appointed. The STEM and humanities coordinators work closely with the department chairs at RHS. The department chairs work closely with the course coordinators who work closely with the classroom teachers in facilitating informal review of curricula focusing on horizontal alignment and revision using assessment results. District leadership and the board of education use all available standardized assessment data such as SAT, PSAT, and AP results to inform decisions regarding curricular offerings and revisions. Building leadership and teachers also use standardized testing data as well as classroom assessment data to inform revisions to curricula.

District leadership including the STEM and humanities coordinators as well as building leadership including the department chairs, course coordinators, and teachers have the opportunity to use time associated with department meetings, the Thursday afternoon professional hour, and periodic professional development days on the school calendar to develop, evaluate, and revise the curriculum. However, this scheduled time is also used to meet the demands of other pressing needs at RHS or in the district. Frequently, time for curriculum focus gets diminished. There are funds set aside for teachers to write curriculum during the summer. Any request for summer curriculum writing time originates with the department chairs. Requests are submitted to the RHS principal using a standardized form and are expected as part of the school's annual budget development process. The principal prioritizes the areas in need of review and revision. New course proposals are considered by the principal and are determined by district need. Development of curriculum for new courses occurs over the summer and is funded primarily by the central office budget. Funding for curriculum review or professional development requests is provided by the RHS budget primarily and may take place during the school year or over the summer as needed. The 2019-2020 budget includes \$27,560 for work on 26 courses, five of which were newly approved courses. According to the Endicott survey, only 35 percent of staff believe that sufficient time is provided for curriculum evaluation, review, and revision of work, and 65 percent of staff believe that they are directly involved in this work.

Because the district provides the school with sufficient personnel for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research, RHS is building the capacity and expertise necessary to create a strong, rigorous curriculum; when sufficient time and financial resources are also allocated, the curriculum development process will gain momentum resulting in a strong, cohesive curriculum ensuring that students will have the opportunity to practice and achieve the school's learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview

- teachers
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 2 Commendations

Commendation

The development of a common curriculum format and district curriculum writing guide to ensure that all curriculum will include units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills; the school's 21st century learning expectations; instructional strategies; and assessment practices that include the use of specific and measurable criteria for success, such as school-wide analytic or course-specific rubrics

Commendation

The emphasis on depth of understanding and application of knowledge through inquiry and problem-solving, higher order thinking, authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school, and the informed and ethical use of technology

Commendation

The commitment to providing staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center that enable full implementation of the curriculum

Commendation

The provision of sufficient supportive instructional materials to fully implement the curriculum

Commendation

The value and support for professional development

Commendation

The sufficient funding for appropriate technology to fully implement the curriculum in addition to support personnel for technical support and lesson plan integration

Commendation

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Commendation

Commendation

Standard 2 Recommendations

Recommendation

Complete curriculum for all courses in all departments using the common format that includes essential questions, concepts, content, skills, 21st century learning expectations, instructional strategies, assessment practices including specific and measurable criteria for success

Recommendation

Increase cross-disciplinary learning opportunities for students

Recommendation

Ensure that there is effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district

Recommendation

Implement a formal review cycle and process for each department and each course with adequate time and funding for curriculum development, review, and revision including input from all teachers

Recommendation

Increase teacher collaboration across grade levels to ensure vertical alignment

Recommendation

Provide training to all teachers on use of the common curriculum writing template using the district curriculum writing guide

Recommendation

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Standard 3 Indicator 1

Conclusions

Teachers' instructional practices are examined in some areas to ensure consistency with the school's core values, and beliefs.

Many teachers are familiar with the school's identified beliefs about learning. According to the Endicott survey, 71 percent of teachers believe they continuously examine their instructional practices to ensure consistency with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. In the self-study, teachers report they reflect on practice through collaboration and conferencing. Teachers report formal and informal observations allowing for consistent examination of teaching practices between teachers and supervisors. In addition, teachers recently completed school-wide professional development to learn how to use peer observations to support reflective practice, to build consistency in departments, and to ensure alignment with core values. However, only some teachers practice this strategy on a consistent basis. Departments such as English and health, formally complete and debrief peer observations twice per semester. In addition, the social studies department requires new teachers to observe veteran teachers to support alignment with school core values and beliefs. Many teachers engage in reflection of practice during the weekly Thursday afternoon professional hour. At department meetings, departments sometimes examine instructional practices to ensure cohesion among teachers and to inform modification of instruction. Some teachers also examine practice through informal discussions with colleagues during common planning times.

When instructional practices are continuously examined to ensure consistency to the school's core values and beliefs, all students will be able to achieve at high levels.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 3 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Teachers at Ridgefield High School (RHS) support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by frequently engaging students as active and self-directed learners; emphasizing inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking; and integrating technology to implicitly support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. In some areas, teachers personalize learning beyond offering student choice, create opportunities to apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks, and engage students in self-assessment and reflection. Teachers' instructional practice infrequently engages students in cross-disciplinary learning.

RHS students enjoy being in the classroom and actively engage in their learning. The vast majority of teachers provide students opportunities to be self-directed learners. In an AP Psychology class, students create an extended metaphor using a self-selected theme to create a presentation for peers on the structures and functions of the human brain. In a Spanish III class, students select a fashion designer from a Spanish-speaking country, conduct research, and create a visual presentation to be presented in the target language. Teachers also emphasize inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking. According to the Endicott survey, 72 percent of parents agree that teachers emphasize inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking. Examples of this practice include a Science Research class, where higher order thinking and problem solving is incorporated by requiring students to choose a topic of interest, research peer-reviewed journal articles, and annotate to gather information to develop an inquiry question. In a freshmen health course, students complete a personal wellness plan. Students are required to select an issue or problem they are having at home or at school, identify ways of overcoming those obstacles, create a SMART goal, and write self-reflections on progress.

Across the school, most teachers integrate technology to enhance instruction and increase engagement. The school employs a one-to-one device model, which facilitates peer collaboration, links students to professional content at the global level, and can be used to practice skills. In a health class, students viewed a documentary while completing a graphic organizer to prepare for an open discussion on the obesity crisis in the United States. Teachers are required to use Google Classroom to streamline communication with students and parents. Some teachers also use Google Classroom to collect data. In a mathematics class, a teacher uses Google Forms to conduct quarterly student perception surveys to inform instruction.

According to the Endicott survey, 91 percent of staff agree teachers personalize instruction to support the achievement of the school's learning objectives. In sharp contrast, only 31 percent of students believe they receive personalized instruction at RHS. Some teachers deliberately personalize instruction by varying content, process, and product. In a Resource Mathematics class, students participate in learning stations where the teacher has individualized the learning experience to each student's readiness level. Many teachers offer varying degrees of student choice as a means of personalizing learning.

Some teachers in some departments integrate the application of knowledge and skills to authentic tasks in the classroom. According to the Endicott survey, 46 percent of students agree they have the opportunity to apply skills outside the classroom. Business students participate in the statewide stock market challenge. This online program provides an extended learning opportunity for students as it connects students to a global economy, while preparing students for their financial futures. Opportunity beyond the classroom exists in a Sports Marketing class where students planned, promoted and ran a tournament for charity. Some teachers offer opportunities to reflect on work and self-critique.

According to the Endicott survey, 66 percent of students agree that teachers provide opportunities to self-assess work. In the English department, teachers confer with students at least twice a year to provide individual writing support on a specific writing task. A teacher in the social studies department has students complete a reflection piece after unit projects. This student task requires individual responses where students indicate areas of strength and weakness within their work. Students are also asked to inform how they could improve their work.

There is limited opportunity for students to participate in cross-disciplinary learning. The English and social

studies departments provide an American Studies class, which addresses literacy through the study of history. However, according to the Endicott survey, only 48 percent of students agree teachers include topics from other subject areas in their classes. In addition, classroom observation and student interviews indicate infrequent cross-disciplinary connections within most departments.

Because teachers engage students as active and self-directed learners, emphasize inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking, and integrate technology into the daily classroom, students are able to achieve goals and develop 21st century skills in a dynamic environment. When teachers can further personalize instruction, facilitate the application of knowledge and skills to support authentic tasks, regularly implement self-reflection, and engage students in cross-disciplinary learning, student achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations will be fully supported.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- Endicott survey

Standard 3 Indicator 3

Conclusions

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

Common formative assessment tools used by teachers include Kahoot, Noodle Tools, Read and Write platform for dictation, text to speech, Google Forms, and Google Documents with comments to provide direct feedback to students and information for teacher instruction, as well as entrance and exit tickets.

Many teachers indicate that they strategically differentiate to meet the learning needs of all students. Such differentiation varies by content and level. In English classes, teachers provide students with one-to-one writing conferences providing students with immediate feedback and personalization. In addition, some students are given a thesis template and sentence starters, audiobooks, and guided notes. In social studies, students are given three or four differentiated versions of the same activity and provided with technology such as a mapping in geography to support their learning. In math, students in co-taught classrooms are placed in strategy groups by skill levels to target their instruction. During the panel discussion with students, they mentioned virtual opportunities and alternate opportunities for assignments.

Nearly 92 percent of teachers state they use group activities, and teachers were observed using group activities during classroom visits. Nearly 91 percent of students state that the teachers use group activities. Observed examples of group work included students working in AP Government to research the roles and responsibilities of the Senate and Congress in order to prepare the performance task to write a bill, and students preparing for a Socratic seminar in Foundations of Modern History. Students also worked in purposefully designed groups in science during lab work as well as in exploring relationships between predator, prey, and producer populations.

Nearly 91 percent of teachers state that they provide alternative strategies within the regular classroom, and 63 percent of students stated that their teachers provided a variety of teaching strategies. Teachers meet with students during scheduled writing conferences and offer opportunities for students to receive additional support after school or during school hours which was stated in both teacher and student panels. Technology is regularly used to provide alternative instruction such as text to speech and audio novels. In social studies, a teacher creates multiple assignments on one topic to meet the learning needs of her students.

Because teachers at RHS regularly adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by using formative assessment, especially during instructional time; strategically differentiating; purposefully organizing group learning activities; and by providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom, student opportunity for success is increased.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students

Standard 3 Indicator 4

Conclusions

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

Nearly 82 percent of teachers indicate they use formative and summative assessments to improve instructional practice. Departmental colleagues share Thursdays after school and department time during the week to review and discuss curriculum and instructional strategies. Teachers in the English department look for trends in student work to identify areas of weakness and then design lessons to address those weaknesses. Math teachers use item analysis to identify concepts and skills that require additional instruction. The world languages department regularly uses standardized tests, midterm and final exams to determine where their instruction might need to improve.

Nearly 59 percent of teachers indicate that they have opportunities to examine student work to improve instructional practices. While some teachers collaborate within departments to improve their instructional practices by using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments and examining student work, there is currently not a focus on examining student work across disciplines, and there is no systematized structure or process for the collaborative review of data or student work.

Only 12 percent of parents indicate that teachers have asked them for feedback about the instruction their children are experiencing. In special education, teachers reach out to parents about their children's genre interests in reading and regularly communicate with parents about the students' Individualized Education Performance (IEP) goals. Nearly 34 percent of students indicate that teachers ask for their opinions and ideas to improve how they teach. Some teachers ask students for feedback through surveys, detailed self-reflection, Google Forms, and discussions about projects. Teachers have attended professional learning to integrate peer observations. Each department has its own implementation of peer observations. Some teachers provide direct feedback to teachers if they want it, while others observe a teacher and learn new ideas to implement in their own classroom. Many teachers report using the supervision and evaluation processes to set goals and to improve their instructional practices.

Some teachers examine current research in professional learning sessions and during their time after school on Thursdays for an hour. This concept is driven by the department leader. Some professional learning is focused on department goals, while some professional learning and research are driven by a school-wide goal such as peer observations to improve instructional practices or developing a coherent departmental practice in writing. English, social studies, and mathematics departments report using book studies as a means of examining current research to improve instruction.

Nearly 76 percent of teachers believe that they improve their instructional practices by engaging in formal opportunities for professional discourse focused on instructional practices. Most professional discourse is content focused through department meetings, Thursday after-school meetings, half-day professional learning sessions, and walk-throughs. Most teachers do not participate in cross-disciplinary discourse.

When all teachers, individually and collaboratively, use student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments; regularly examine student work; use feedback from a variety of sources, including students, other teachers, supervisors, and parents; and engage in meaningful professional discourse focused on instructional practice, instructional practice will improve resulting in increased opportunities for students to practice and achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 3 Indicator 5

Conclusions

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

According to the Endicott survey, roughly 83 percent of students perceive that their teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. Ninety percent of teachers report that they maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. Teachers report that they have choice on some professional learning days to engage in learning that is directly related to their content areas. Quite a few teachers submit proposals for approval and teachers select their workshops of choice. Some teachers engage in peer observations and reflect upon their own practices after observing their colleagues. The math department schedules peer observations, and the social studies department leader requires all new teachers in the department to observe several senior teachers.

Most teachers have post-graduate degrees such as a second master's degree, a sixth-year degree, a doctoral degree, or are currently continuing their education. In addition, select teachers have been invited to serve as AP graders for the College Board. Many teachers attend professional development activities outside the school, including conferences sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, National Council of Teachers of English, Connecticut Council for the Social Studies, Associated Teachers of Mathematics in Connecticut, and Taft School's summer AP institutes.

Because teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices, the school ensures that students benefit from having knowledgeable and effective teachers.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 3 Commendations

Commendation

The consistent engagement of students as active and self-directed learners

Commendation

The commitment of teachers to collaborate informally with colleagues in order to improve instructional practices

Commendation

The teachers' commitment to maintaining expertise in their content areas and in content-specific instructional practices

Commendation

The pervasive use of formative assessment and strategic differentiation across the school

Commendation

The use of formative assessments to drive instruction

Commendation

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Standard 3 Recommendations

Recommendation

Increase the individual and collaborative use of student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments to improve instructional practice

Recommendation

Increase the use of feedback from students and parents for purposes of improving instructional practice

Recommendation

Provide a coherent structure and process for departments and the school to analyze and share data in departments and in cross-curricular contents in order to improve growth and achievement of all learners

Recommendation

Develop a school-wide process to elicit parent and student feedback regarding the effectiveness of instructional practices

Recommendation

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Standard 4 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The professional staff at Ridgefield High School (RHS) does not yet use a formal process to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations based on specific and measurable criteria for success.

While RHS has developed a school-wide rubric with input from multiple stakeholders, the committee responsible for developing the school-wide rubric has yet to create an implementation plan. Thirty-nine percent of the staff indicated on the Endicott survey that they use the school-wide criteria for success when analyzing student work. Therefore, this rubric has not been used by the vast majority of staff to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. There were, however, examples of teachers using the school-wide rubric to assess individual student progress in achieving the school's learning expectations. The robotics final project required students to give a presentation about the engineering design process that went into the development of the students' robots. These presentations were assessed using all six aspects of the school-wide rubric. Similarly, in an English classroom, students' writing assignments were assessed using the school-wide rubric. Further, there are many examples that illustrated departmental, course-specific, and teacher-created rubrics that addressed components of the school's core values. For example, the English department has grade-level writing rubrics that address aspects of communication. The health department provided two rubrics, the higher order thinking (HOTS) rubric and the discussion rubric for participants, that incorporate aspects of knowledge, communication, collaboration, and mindfulness.

When the professional staff of RHS employs a formal process based on the school-wide analytic rubric, whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations can be more accurately assessed.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The professional staff at Ridgefield High School (RHS) does not yet communicate either individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to students and their families nor the school's progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to the school community.

RHS uses PowerSchool as its student data management system to communicate individual academic progress to students and their families. RHS's PowerSchool portal provides timely access to attendance, assignment grades, quarterly grades, and exam grades, but currently, RHS's use of PowerSchool to report assessment data does not include communication of the 21st century learning expectations. Based on recent professional development for district-wide school administration in the summer of 2019, it can be assumed that the district intends to communicate individual student progress to students and their families at some point using specific and measurable criteria aligned to the district's vision of the graduate, starting at the elementary level.

Once this district initiative is rolled out at RHS, members of the school community will be able to monitor individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- students
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 3

Conclusions

The professional staff at Ridgefield High School (RHS) frequently collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement.

Through the data management system in place at RHS (PowerSchool), teachers can access a variety of student achievement data (NWEA, PSAT, SAT, AP, and ACTFL) and use this data to inform instruction. Some departments at RHS, such as English, mathematics, and special education, analyze PSAT data to inform changes in instruction and curriculum.

The Ridgefield Board of Education indicated that school administrators present data reports on a regular basis. Board members noted that administrators present the data, provide context, highlight trends in the data, and layout short- and long-term strategies. The board of education then considers the school-proposed strategies and determines how to support those strategies and adjust the budget as needed.

Central office staff noted that numerous standardized assessment results are used to effect change in instruction and curriculum. For example, results from the NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) led to a revision in the Ridgefield High School's ninth grade math curriculum. Achievement data on world languages placement tests in eighth grade assisted with proper student placement in the language courses at the high school. The reading teachers also confirm the use of a standardized assessment, Degrees of Reading Power (DRP), to inform instruction.

Across the school, RHS teachers collect student data and use that data to inform instruction. The world languages department uses achievement data from common midyear and final exams. The social studies department uses achievement data from the four benchmark assessments it administers each year. The English department has developed skill-based performance tasks built around overarching questions. Teachers calibrate scoring on these assessments and use achievement results to inform instruction. The mathematics department systemically reviews achievement data, identifies student deficiencies with specific content standards, and makes changes to instructional practices and curricula. In the physical education and health department, teachers gather data from a student inventory and use that data to inform instruction.

A vast majority of RHS teachers use data from formative and summative assessments to determine when to re-teach concepts or create new lessons to help students achieve success. One science teacher noted that he purposefully codes assessment questions based on the standards and then provides feedback to students. Students then have opportunities to revisit and/or focus on identified areas of concern in future activities. One Advanced Placement (AP) Psychology teacher explained how the AP Psychology teachers develop assessments from College Board released tests and use the results of these assessments to determine the next steps for revisiting concepts in new ways.

By collecting, disaggregating, and analyzing data, RHS's professional staff are able to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement.

Sources of Evidence

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

- central office personnel
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 4

Conclusions

Prior to each unit of study, some teachers at Ridgefield High School (RHS) in some content areas communicate the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed to the students.

According to the Endicott survey, 50 percent of students, 54 percent of parents, and 60 percent of staff indicate that staff communicated the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning before each unit. Students confirmed that at the beginning of each course, they receive a class prospectus that is easily accessible for the duration of the course in the Google Classroom. Students explained that the contents of the syllabi vary by teacher, and teachers explained that they have autonomy in the creation of syllabi. The school does not have a common format, and the only required component is the teacher's grading policy. The Government and Politics course syllabus provides a course description, bulleted unit topics, grading policy, and class expectations. The AP Human Geography course syllabus provides a course description, the goals of the course, and the grading policy. A physics college preparatory syllabus provides the course outline, unit topics, and grading policy. The world languages department's common syllabi provide department procedures, policies, expectations, and grading policy. All RHS teachers have set up a Google Classroom for each course. While the Google Classrooms vary by teacher, students indicate that topics being studied are clearly communicated in most Google Classrooms.

RHS teachers often communicate the learning expectations verbally at the start of a new unit or topic. One American Studies teacher explained that both his English co-teacher and he frequently refer students back to the overarching essential question of the course at the start of each unit. English teachers noted that, across grade-level courses, the over-arching questions are consistent and referenced throughout the duration of the courses.

When all RHS teachers, by design, communicate the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed prior to a unit of study, students and families will gain a better understanding of what is expected and will be able to make connections between unit-specific learning goals and the 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 5

Conclusions

Prior to summative assessments, teachers across departments at Ridgefield High School (RHS) provide students with specific and measurable criteria for success, such as corresponding rubrics, which define targeted high levels of achievement.

Classroom teachers consistently use department-level and course-specific rubrics and study guides that define high levels of achievement prior to summative assessments and for writing assignments. In an English class, students were given a rubric on a writing vignettes assignment that provided specific and measurable criteria for success on six elements. Each of the elements was well defined and provided students with criteria that addressed qualities such as the level of description, use of figurative language, and conscious word choice. In another English class, students were presenting on their independent reading assignments which focused on a book that they chose to read on their own. The specific criteria included strategies to incorporate into their presentations to engage the audience and criteria to illustrate a student's knowledge of the book including the use of cited evidence to support their arguments. In an American Government class, rubrics were created, in part by the students, which provided specific criteria needed for a project on important American principles from the time of our founding fathers that are still relevant today. Specific criteria included the level of the content, organization, word choice on a slogan, appearance, and creativity. In Italian classes, rubrics are provided prior to performance assessments for letter writing, speaking assessments, and cultural projects. The Endicott survey results support these findings, with over 70 percent of students consistently agreeing that teachers regularly use rubrics to assess work, that students understand in advance what work needs to be accomplished, and that students understand the rubrics teachers use.

By providing department and course-specific rubrics with specific and measurable criteria for success prior to summative assessments, RHS teachers assure that students will understand what is expected of them and thus can be better prepared to successfully complete those assessments.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 4 Indicator 6

Conclusions

In each unit of study, the vast majority of teachers at Ridgefield High School (RHS) employ a wide range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments.

According to the Endicott survey, 94 percent of the teachers report that they use a variety and range of assessment strategies. A mathematics teacher noted that she performs frequent checks within each class period through thumbs up or down, exit/entrance slips, and Kahoot. In world languages classes, formative assessments include Kahoot, Quizlet, and independent and group oral responses to quick check questions in the targeted languages. A health teacher indicated that she employs notebook checks, student-generated quick questions, and turn-and-talk strategies with teacher observation. In an American Studies class students engaged in a think-pair-share combined with an organizer to ensure accuracy of explanation and evidence. An English teacher described quick writes in journals, turn-and-talk with guided note sheets, and in-class essays. In social studies, course-specific benchmark assessments are given four times per year. In a health and wellness class, a topic quiz was returned to students for an opportunity for review and retake, and the AP Physics class had been given time to correct errors on an exam. An AP Physics teacher affirmed that exams are returned to students with a raw score, students then work collaboratively to rewrite responses, and the teacher records a corrected grade. In an Italian I class, students were preparing for a test on greetings, numbers, dates, and times through multiple activities. In freshman physical education, the teacher assessed students' prior skill development in volleyball through small group observations and then provided specific instruction of noted skill weaknesses in bumping and setting the ball. AP Calculus students answer AP-style multiple-choice and open-ended questions. The AP Psychology teacher explained that the AP Psychology teachers use similar assessments with test items released by the College Board.

Some teachers develop authentic formative and summative assessments. The robotics final project requires students to develop a robot and to present their design to their classmates. In Interior Design, students work with a client to develop a mood board and then provide a design for an actual room. In physics, students use knowledge of ratios and linear functions to predict and investigate the point of impact of two battery-powered cards. In biology, students create models to illustrate their understanding of changes in the ecosystem after a forest fire. In special education, students create SMART goals to measure progress toward personal goals, and in a self-contained mathematics class, special education students examine financial scenarios and evaluate student spending choices.

As a result of RHS teachers' varying methods of assessing student learning, students have numerous opportunities to demonstrate mastery of learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- facility tour
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 7

Conclusions

Teachers at Ridgefield High School (RHS) collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments.

The school provides teachers with time to collaborate on Thursday afternoons after-school hours. There are also regular early release professional development days embedded in the school calendar during which school leadership provides opportunities and time for collaboration. The long block, which is embedded in the middle of the day, also provides time for teachers who have overlapping prep time, to collaborate informally.

Teachers, most often in departments, have the opportunity to come together to collaborate to create common formative assessments and to make adjustments to instructional practices as needed. In some departments, this time is also used to review student work and discuss effective instructional strategies. The English department uses collaboration time to grade student essays that are administered quarterly across the whole department. This provides a strong opportunity to calibrate assessment practices. The world languages department uses this time to review summative assessments like their department midterms and final exams to examine areas of student learning deficit and to adjust instructional strategies for improvement of student performance.

Other examples of collaboration include discussions and decision-making regarding grading rationales across common courses. This is representative of important horizontal articulation within courses taught by more than one teacher within a department. Articulation includes decision-making on common grading categories, common weighting of categories, and common practices regarding the types of assessments and activities that fall within these categories. Some vertical articulation between grades also exists, particularly within common-leveled courses in the math department from one grade level to another. Another example of important collaborative work for department improvement is the establishment of performance improvement plans (PIPs). These plans drive school improvement through specific goals related to learning. Student learning objective (SLO) goals are sometimes connected to these PIPs.

According to the Endicott survey, over 70 percent of teachers agree that they collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments. Teachers noted that the establishment of professional learning communities (PLCs), beyond their current implementation in the math department, would provide for more opportunity for school-wide formal collaboration. A committee has been created to investigate adjustments to the master teaching schedule in future years to ensure that teachers who share common courses are free during specific common periods to collaborate in the creation of common assessments and the planning of instruction.

While teachers collaborate regularly to create, analyze, and revise formative and summative assessments, including common assessments, when teachers have sufficient collaboration time dedicated to their work on assessments, student achievement of course-specific and school-wide learning expectations will be measured consistently within departments and across the school and assessment results can be used to inform instructional practices and curriculum.

Sources of Evidence

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

- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 8

Conclusions

Teachers at Ridgefield High School (RHS) frequently provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work.

Many students stressed the helpfulness of the English writing labs at RHS and noted that meetings with their English teachers in one-to-one conferences ensured the opportunity for specific corrective feedback to revise and improve their essays. One student indicated that she takes advantage of this opportunity far more than the required times per year. Seniors stressed how helpful these conferences have been in the college essay writing process.

In some areas, specific, timely, and corrective feedback are built right into the curriculum. The reading classes provide a mastery-based framework with students receiving regular feedback to ensure achievement. In the Scientific Research class, students have scheduled check-in times with the teacher to debrief regarding self-assessment of progress and receive specific corrective feedback from the teacher.

In other areas, the feedback process occurs by design during class activities. In the AP Physics class, in-class time was allotted for students to correct errors on a recent assessment. The assessment was returned to the students with a raw score, and students worked collaboratively to examine each question and write accurate responses. The teacher explained that after facilitating a think-group-share as part of the revision process, the assessments were re-graded with a revised score. In the health and wellness class, a topic quiz was returned to students for an opportunity for review and retake. Upon return of the quiz, the teacher noted trends in errors, allowed students to examine errors with a partner and announced the retake for the next day. The AP Psychology teacher detailed a revision process for a task entitled Brain Basket. Student groups engaged in multiple rounds of revision with feedback from peers, and at the conclusion of the task, the teacher debriefed with each group specifically on self-identified areas of challenge. Students then had another opportunity to demonstrate their learning through a constructed-response quiz. In an Italian I class, students were reviewing for an upcoming test through multiple class activities. The teacher provided immediate specific corrective feedback through oral responses and written clarification and models on the SMARTBoard.

Across the school, teachers use either rubrics or checklists on performance tasks to provide feedback to students; however, the depth of corrective feedback varies by teacher. In one American Government class, the teacher provided specific and corrective feedback on a group-created rubric. The teacher not only marked the score range within each category of the rubric but also added very specific and corrective comments such as "Think about your audience, an explanation might have been a great addition to ensure all students understand the cartoon and really connect everyday items to your peers." In an Art Foundations lesson, the teacher conferred with students throughout the activity and assessed the final piece with the visual art assessment rubric. The teacher circled a rating within each of the six categories of the rubric and added comments such as "Beautifully done! Evocative and very well executed. Drawing skills are very strong!" In a self-contained mathematics lesson, the teacher assessed the students using an expectations rubric aligned to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and objectives. On the student sample, the teacher checked whether the expectation met the requirement or did not meet the requirement and wrote comments on the activity sheets, for example, "Great work identifying income and expenses. Excellent job with questions. Remember to visit all stations." The Endicott survey reports that 72 percent of students agree that teachers regularly use rubrics to assess work.

As a result of consistent timely, specific, and corrective feedback from RHS teachers, students are able to revise and improve their work.

Sources of Evidence

- student shadowing
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 9

Conclusions

Across the school, teachers at Ridgefield High School (RHS) regularly use formative assessments to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning.

RHS teachers use a wide range of formative assessments such as thumbs up/down, Kahoot, quick questions, journal entries, and entrance/exit slips. These assessments are frequently used to inform instruction, and teachers adapt their instructional practices for the purpose of improving student learning. In an Algebra I class, the teacher creates daily warm-up activities based on student achievement on previous formative assessments. In a Mandarin class, students are given regular practice saying their names and simple facts about themselves in Mandarin in order to improve their ability to communicate orally in the language. In an Italian I class, students greeted the teacher at the start of class and sang the Italian national anthem. Throughout that Italian class, students responded orally to the teacher's questions as a whole class, in small groups, and independently, and the teacher noted errors in pronunciation and altered her instruction to immediately address those errors either for whole-group or with specific individuals. An English teacher uses journal entries to determine the next steps in writing assignments. Another English teacher detailed how data from the in-class writing assignments are used to inform and provide individualized instruction for students based on their current level of skill acquisition.

By using a wide range of formative assessments, RHS teachers adjust instruction to improve student learning.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 10

Conclusions

Overall, teachers and administrators at Ridgefield High School (RHS), individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practices.

Student work is examined frequently by teachers individually and during collaborative designated department time most often through the lens of an assessment rubric or scoring criteria for success. Common course and common grade-level assessments are given by some teachers in some departments, and student scores are examined collaboratively in order to calibrate teacher grading practices and inform instruction. This process is implemented by world languages teachers when examining midterm and final exam assessments; social studies grade-level classes using their benchmark student results four times per year; English performance tasks given four times a year based on grade-level overarching questions; math item analysis of midterm exam questions to discuss student outcomes and implement adjustments to instruction to reinforce skills from the first semester needed for semester 2 and to also address instruction for the first semester of the following year; and AP social studies teachers who examine released AP student responses to look for deficiencies in responses.

A process for reviewing individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations has not yet been implemented formally at RHS. Teachers incorporate components of the core values and beliefs to evaluate through their own assessment practices that are limited to their own classroom practices. For example, in an Italian class, the teacher asked students, "What can you do to show the core value of resiliency for this upcoming test?" Students then shared multiple ways they could prepare for the test and be resilient. In a social studies class, the communication component of the core values was stressed by the teacher on an assessment of a Socratic seminar. In another social studies class, students were asked to research historical figures that demonstrated the six components of the school's core values. Students then created a group collage with information on each historical figure to demonstrate the characteristics described.

Standardized assessment data is examined by teachers in some disciplines at RHS individually and collaboratively for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instruction. For example, teachers provide students with PSAT or SAT test items for math and English that students practice in these respective courses. The PSAT 8/9 is given to all ninth graders in the spring. This data serves to identify students for intervention in the areas of reading and math. The ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL) is typically administered to students seeking to receive the Seal of Bi-literacy. It is given to students typically at the end of level four in a world languages course and serves as the benchmark to whether a student receives the Seal of Bi-literacy. NWEA math MAP results were used to revise the ninth grade mathematics course to address deficiencies in skills for students entering RHS. Academic data from sending middle schools are often used as the primary recommendation criteria for placement into freshman courses at RHS.

Survey data from current students has been used by some teachers to inform their instructional practices; however, the use of survey data from alumni is limited to post-secondary education and career information. At the end of each quarter, some teachers provide students with a Google survey asking for feedback on their instructional practices and on assessments from that marking period. This feedback is then shared and discussed between teachers and students as the new quarter begins. In a Government and Politics class, a teacher asks for feedback after every summative assessment on how well the teacher prepared the students for the assessment. In a biology class, a teacher embeds a question within the summative assessment asking how well the student believes he or she will do on the assessment and why. This information is examined by the teacher for possible adjustments to instructional practices if needed. In reading classes, qualitative data from students is collected quarterly. Over three-quarters of students surveyed agreed with the statement, "Teachers use a variety of methods to assess my learning."

Because teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice, students at RHS are able to achieve at high levels.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- student work
- teachers
- students
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

Standard 4 Indicator 11

Conclusions

Grading and reporting practices at Ridgefield High School (RHS) are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with board policy; however, the Ridgefield Board of Education (BOE) has yet to develop policy and practices that would allow RHS to align grading and reporting practices with the school's core values and beliefs about learning which mirror the district's vision of the graduate.

RHS teachers meet annually with their departments to review and revise grading rationales to ensure alignment. Articulation includes decision-making on categories, category weights, and the type of assessments and activities that fall within these categories. All world languages teachers, with the exception of the AP teachers, have common grading categories and weights. In the English department, grading categories and weights are the same across grade-level courses, and English teachers calibrate the scoring of writing assignments. In mathematics, grading categories and weights are the same across grade-level courses and vertically aligned within course sequences.

On June 24, 2019, the Ridgefield BOE approved a new policy and practices for homework. All RHS teachers have modified the homework category weight in their courses' grading to align with this board policy, counting homework at no more than ten percent.

When RHS teachers review and revise their grading and reporting practices to ensure alignment with the school's core values, their beliefs about learning, and the district's vision of the graduate, students will understand what level of achievement is expected to successfully meet the school's learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teachers
- school board
- school leadership
- school website

Standard 4 Commendations

Commendation

The collection, disaggregation, and analysis of data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement

Commendation

The wide range of formative and summative assessments employed within units of study

Commendation

The specific and timely feedback provided to ensure students revise and improve their work

Commendation

The use of formative assessments to inform and adapt instruction for the purpose of improving student learning

Commendation

The consistent use of rubrics with specific and measurable criteria across departments

Commendation

The implementation of grading rationales across common courses

Commendation

The calibration of grading practices on common grade-level assessments

Commendation

The establishment of the writing lab to provide students with specific, timely, and corrective feedback on writing tasks

Standard 4 Recommendations

Recommendation

Develop and implement a formal process to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations and vision of the graduate based on specific and measurable criteria for success, such as school-wide analytic rubrics

Recommendation

Develop and implement a formal process for collecting, reporting, and communicating both individual student progress and whole-school progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations

Recommendation

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

Recommendation

Ensure that grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning

Recommendation

Provide for more formal opportunities to collaborate on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessment, including common assessments, and use achievement results to inform instructional practices and curriculum

Recommendation

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Recommendation

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Standard 5 Indicator 1

Conclusions

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

Over 70 percent of students, staff, and parents feel that Ridgefield High School (RHS) is a safe and supportive place, and more than 90 percent of parents believe the school encourages students to take responsibility for their learning. The student and parent handbook explicitly communicates school policies and procedures. These documents are available on the school website and parents and students sign electronically to document a shared understanding of these policies and procedures.

Students reported they feel the principal addresses discipline issues in a direct and consistent way. For example, regarding a recent vandalism issue, the students reported the administration handled the issue in a timely and serious manner and made school-wide announcements to discuss the zero tolerance to such behavior. At RHS, in an effort to promote positive school climate, the sophomore class annually participates in the "Names Can Really Hurt Us" day-long workshop that addresses issues including stereotyping, prejudice, and name-calling. Further, a student was proud to share the addition of gender-neutral bathrooms designated throughout the building.

RHS has over 40 clubs and activities and offers over 33 varsity sports supporting student involvement. The Endicott survey states over 60 percent of students feel proud of their school. A sense of pride and ownership in RHS is apparent and evidenced by the 50 percent of students involved in competitive athletics, robotics, and the exceptional visual and performing arts programs. The vast majority of students and teachers expressed pride in spirit week and spoke highly of the amount of participation in school activities. Students shared that the whole community gets involved in going to football and basketball games and that many own Ridgefield athletic apparel. The entire community has high expectations for students. Conversations with students revealed that they believe much is expected of them in terms of learning, goal-setting, behavior, respect for others and participation in the school and community.

The vast majority of students report that they feel supported by their teachers, and their teachers are readily available to ensure they meet with success, including before and after school. Many students perceive the school to have a competitive culture both academically and athletically and express the desire for more authentic ways to connect with their peers. Teachers also shared that students who struggle to connect academically and athletically can, at times, "get lost in a bigger school." There is a desire for more authentic ways to connect within the school community as a whole. In classrooms, teachers invite students to after school help and post in the classroom the days that help sessions will occur.

As a result of the numerous programs, activities, high expectations, and school pride, students at Ridgefield High School participate in a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters students' responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations which creates a nurturing school environment focused on helping them learn and grow.

While the school community is committed to building a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning, when students have increased opportunities to connect with faculty and peers in a less competitive and more authentic manner, all students will develop a sense of shared ownership and school pride.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teachers
- students
- parents
- Endicott survey
- school website

Standard 5 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The school strives to be equitable and inclusive, ensuring access to challenging academic experiences for all students, making certain that courses throughout the curriculum are populated with students reflecting the diversity of the student body, fostering heterogeneity, and supporting the achievements of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

All students are required to take 4.5 credits of open elective classes, all of which are grouped heterogeneously. Most electives in social studies and science are open to all students regardless of grade level. In addition, all core classes are open enrollment which allows interested students to enroll in the courses without a prerequisite or teacher recommendations. Teachers make course-level recommendations, but students can override that recommendation so that students can challenge themselves as appropriate. The program of studies clearly states course expectations and includes a homework code to communicate the expected level of commitment to coursework.

Over 80 percent of students report that they have a number of opportunities to take courses in which students of various levels of ability are enrolled. As observed during class visits and reported by teachers there is a balance of groupings of students, including students with learning disabilities, to have equal access to the same curriculum. Students have access to co-taught classes to ensure inclusion models are represented.

As a result of the extensive course offerings and open enrollment policy, the students at Ridgefield High School have numerous opportunities to access challenging academic classes that also reflect the diversity of the student body enabling the students to work toward achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- Endicott survey
- school website

Standard 5 Indicator 3

Conclusions

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

The advisory program currently meets one or two times a month for approximately 30 minutes. Teachers and students report that advisory does not occur frequently enough to build meaningful connections. Students also report inconsistencies among teachers in the delivery of the advisory program. According to the Endicott survey, approximately 53 percent of students feel there is an adult in the school who knows them well and helps them to regularly succeed. Many teachers expressed a desire to increase and develop a strong advisory program in order to build more meaningful connections with their advisees. Students shared they feel strong connections with their classroom teachers and feel supported by them. Parents also report they feel the teachers are available to support their students in a timely and supportive manner.

Strengthening the school's formal, ongoing process through which each student has an adult in the school in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists him/her in meeting the school's 21st century learning expectations, will help all students feel connected and supported within the school.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- teachers
- students
- parents
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 4

Conclusions

In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff at Ridgefield High School regularly engage in professional discourse, access resources outside of school, dedicate formal time to implement professional development and apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

The district provides seven early release days and five full days that are dedicated to teacher professional development as part of the school calendar. In addition, every Thursday, teachers engage in an afternoon professional hour. This hour is used for a variety of purposes including, but not limited to, building-based initiatives, department initiatives, and for grade-level collaborative time.

Teachers collaboratively engage in professional readings. For example, the social studies, English, and math department chairs facilitate department book studies based on teacher requests. There is generous funding for teachers and departments to order professional readings. For the 2019-2020 school year, there is \$30,010 set aside for conference attendance fees and mileage as well as \$22,230 set aside for substitutes to cover professional development opportunities. Teachers reported using this time to go out and attend professional development and to come back and share with staff. As an example, in English this allowed teachers to work collaboratively with one another.

According to the Endicott survey, 54 percent of teachers feel that the school's professional development programs enable them to acquire and use skills to improve instruction and assessment. While teachers have historically felt that they do not have much input or choice into the professional development they attend, they have acknowledged that, recently, that seems to be changing. Last school year, as well as the current school year, the district has offered a professional development day that is designed and run by teachers. Individual teachers can propose a workshop that they would like to run for their colleagues. The staff can choose from myriad options that they feel are best suited to their specific needs. Teachers would like to continue to have more input into the design and topics of professional development days. Currently, the school does not have a professional development committee to give all stakeholders a voice in these days.

Additionally, teachers have limited opportunities to collaborate with their colleagues across disciplines. The staff attempt, within the constraints of the school schedule, to share ideas and implement skills gained through professional development. Teachers often engage one another, informally, in reflective discussions about teaching and learning, meet to discuss ideas, plan lessons, and obtain advice during their own time during planning periods, lunch, and before or after school. There are no current formalized data teams or common planning time built into the school day.

As a result of a culture of collaboration and professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning, teachers have the opportunity to broadly apply skills, practices, and ideas gained to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Sources of Evidence

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

- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 5

Conclusions

At Ridgefield High School school leaders consistently use researched-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning.

All administrators, department chairs, and teachers have been trained on the Danielson model for teacher evaluation. The school has incorporated differentiated models of evaluation as appropriate for departments. The school has invested in an outside consultant to train staff on an ongoing basis on the implementation of the teacher evaluation system. Each summer, the administrative team receives professional development on teacher evaluation including all evaluating the same video lesson. A discussion on the evaluation of the lesson then ensues. Further, new administrators receive training to build capacity and calibrate their evaluation practices. In addition, 80 percent of teachers feel input from supervisors who are responsible for evaluating their teaching plays an important role in improving their instructional practices. Also, teachers shared that if corrective feedback is given by her evaluator, the evaluator offers an opportunity to revisit the classroom to offer support. Teachers in some departments also conduct informal peer visits and shared they then meet with their colleagues to engage in meaningful discussion.

Thus, the use of research-based evaluation and supervision processes helps staff to ensure that students are achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

Standard 5 Indicator 6

Conclusions

The organization of time generally supports research-based instruction and the learning needs of all students but does not support professional collaboration among teachers.

The students frequently report that the schedule supports their learning. They also describe the benefits of having a variety of course offerings and the opportunity to take electives or to schedule regular time in the math or writing lab. In addition, students use their free periods to go to the library learning commons, to collaborate with peers, to access the math and writing labs, and to meet with teachers.

The school schedule rotates on an eight-day cycle with class period one through four always meeting in the first half of the school day and periods five through eight always meeting in the second half of the school day. Each day, one of the eight periods drops. This allows each class to have an extended period once during every eight-day cycle. Normal class periods are 43 minutes while the extended period lasts for approximately an hour and a half. This extended block of time allows for the implementation of research-based instructional practices including inquiry-based teaching and cooperative group work. In addition, this long block allows time for students to receive extra help as necessary. There is evident flexible use of time within the schedule to support student needs. There is a shared understanding at the end of quarters for staggered testing by the department so students do not get overwhelmed.

There is confusion with the schedule for many. The administration recognizes the complexities of the schedule and in response, the district has updated features within the PowerSchool app. These features allow all students and staff to see what day rotation and period is being held at any given time. In addition, a committee has been formed to look at the school schedule. The committee, which consists of many stakeholders within the building, has met on numerous occasions to discuss possible schedule options for the future. Teachers were given an opportunity to provide their input via a school-wide survey. However, according to administration, the staff remains split on how they would like to see the schedule evolve going forward. As a result, the school continues the conversation and the committee will continue to meet to discuss possible schedule revisions.

The school schedule makes it difficult to provide formal collaboration time for all teachers during the school day. There is no formal time or protocol in place to discuss and review student work. While teachers use their own time to collaborate and review student work within their content areas, this varies greatly by the department and the frequency of discussions is inconsistent. The math department has independently created data discussion protocols, in particular with Geometry, Algebra II, and Pre-Calculus. In addition to this, some departments engage in self-directed peer observation cycles, visiting classrooms in pairs and then debrief as a whole department.

The Ridgefield Summer Learning Institute is a credit recovery program available to students that are not successful in passing a course during the academic year. Under special circumstances, counselors offer extended deadlines or reduce schedules in order to help students succeed. The Extended Year Program (ESY) is recommended for IEP students and approved in PPT meetings for students that have demonstrated that without consistent and regular instruction there will be a skill or knowledge regression. Afternoon or evening supports may be offered to homebound students. In addition, extended tutoring hours can be put into place to help students who have returned to school but need continued support in order to be successful. All students are able to take advantage of the math lab and writing lab. The space for math lab is housed within CLASS (Classroom Learning and Student Support), a dedicated location to assist students academically in various courses during the school day. Students may self-identify or be recommended by teachers or counselors to receive services in CLASS. Additional space is dedicated to writing lab where English teachers meet with their students to confer on their writing. There is an off-campus alternate school to support students in a small-group setting serving students who struggle in the traditional learning environment.

While the organization of time supports research-based instruction, when the school provides formal collaborative opportunities for teachers within the school day, the schedule will support and enhance teaching further meeting the learning needs of all students.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 7

Conclusions

By design, student load and class size enable teachers to meet the learning needs of all students.

Teacher course loads are designed to ensure sufficient personalization and individual attention to student needs. No classes have more than 26 students, with the exception of physical education/health and music, and those classes do not exceed 28 students. The average class size by the department are science, 19.2; math, 19.1; English/reading, 17.9; social studies, 20.4; world languages, 17.9; special education, 3.8; arts, 17.2; business, 19.2; family/consumer science, 17.0; and health/physical education, 22.7. To also support student learning, English teachers teach four classes, as opposed to the five taught by teachers in other academic areas. This allows English teachers to hold personalized writing conferences with each individual student multiple times per school year. The Endicott survey reveals 89 percent of students stated their class sizes are reasonable, and 59 percent of teachers responded that their student load and class size enable them to meet the learning needs of individual students.

By deliberately managing student load and class size, teachers are able to meet the learning needs of individual students.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 8

Conclusions

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

The principal is a visible part of the school community and works closely with the administrative and leadership team. The school leadership team has 22 individuals who hold the shared responsibility of ensuring the school sets and maintain goals based on the core values and beliefs of the school. The goals created, called program improvement plans (PIPs), are designed during the summer, and progress is monitored throughout the year.

The principal works collaboratively with the administrative and leadership team to make decisions regarding school issues. She provides the department chairs the autonomy to build professional development decisions based on the department needs. The secretarial staff believes the principal communicates in a timely fashion and handles any concerns promptly. In addition, the principal ensures that she is visible to students and staff daily. According to secretarial staff, the principal blocks off the first class period of every day in her schedule. She uses this time to pop into classes and walk through the school to remain in touch with the pulse of the building on a daily basis.

The principal's decision-making is rooted in the school's core values. These values are student-centered focusing on individual growth, resilience, citizenship, and empathy. The principal encourages teachers to build their capacity through professional development but ensures all outside professional development opportunities are aligned to the core values and beliefs of the school. The principal supports first-year teachers and makes sure to observe the teacher at least once during their first year of teaching. All curricular instructional materials must reflect the core values of the school to be granted funding.

Because the principal purposefully works with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations, the community can be confident there are meaningful opportunities for all students to meet with success.

Sources of Evidence

- teachers
- school leadership
- school support staff

Standard 5 Indicator 9

Conclusions

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

The principal solicited feedback from students, the community, and teachers when finalizing the school's core values and beliefs. She regularly holds a "What's up Doc?" meeting where any student is able to informally meet with her during the school day and discuss any academic, social, athletic or general issues of concern. Students expressed this opportunity makes them feel more connected to the school and that the principal is visible.

Students are afforded the opportunity to run for a seat in the 65-member student government, giving them an official channel to express their collective voice on school-wide decisions. Student government is charged with the planning and implementation of school social and promotional activities. This group meets weekly. In addition, the student body president presents at the board of education meetings to update the members on events and activities occurring at the school, as well as voicing the general opinion of the student body on decisions made by the board and how it affects their daily lives while in school. However, the Endicott survey shows that only 40 percent of students believe they have input in important decisions made at the school.

Parents have a large involvement in the school mainly through the Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA). Members expressed they communicate directly with the principal multiple times during the week. Further, parents feel that the school communicates with them in a timely fashion. According to the Endicott survey, only 44 percent of parents state they have opportunities to be involved in important decisions made at the school.

Teacher voice is represented at regularly held staff council meetings. Each department has a representative to voice concerns for their colleagues at these meetings. Once a month, teachers are able to submit items that must be approved by the administrators before being discussed at these meetings. Some teachers expressed that items brought forward for discussion have not made it to agendas. While teachers express that the administration's doors are always open and that they generally feel supported by administrators, they do not feel that their voice is consistently heard when big decisions need to be made. Teachers would like more opportunities to voice their opinions before decisions are made rather than be the recipient of emails informing them that a big decision affecting the school has been made. This feeling is echoed in the Endicott survey whereby 22 percent of teachers feel that they do not have meaningful involvement in decision-making and 25 percent are undecided. Overall, while students, parents, and teachers feel there is open communication, they, too, perceive they do not have a meaningful role in decision-making. While the school provides opportunities for teachers, students, and parents to have some involvement in some decision-making, the perception of all stakeholders is that they are often left out of the larger, more meaningful decisions.

When the school involves teachers, students, and parents in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making, all stakeholders will take ownership and responsibility for those decisions.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- students
- parents
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 10

Conclusions

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

Some teachers in some departments meet on a formal and informal basis to develop, revise, and implement curriculum and instructional strategies to enhance student achievement. Further, teachers are supported by the administrative team to participate in research-based professional development. The music department is able to attend professional development at Western Connecticut State University. The family and consumer science department engaged in professional development off-campus during a recent professional development day. Many teachers take initiative to ensure students engage in rigorous, authentic learning experiences. Teachers exhibit leadership by proposing new courses to further student achievement toward the school's 21st learning expectations. As an example, a reading course was pitched by teachers and now has become so popular two teachers are responsible for teaching these sections. This innovative class is paperless and students have found enjoyment in the digitally interactive class. Also, the science department introduced a personalized science research program that was created by teachers to promote innovative research conducted by students. Students then present their findings at state science fairs. Teachers are also school leaders by serving as department chairs or department leaders for their respective content areas.

Because teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school regularly, there is a high level of engagement in learning.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 11

Conclusions

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

Board of education members provide support to the school principal and administration to aid in student achievement. The chairwoman of the board of education and the superintendent of schools meet on a weekly basis to discuss short- and long-term goals. The board of education maintains a positive, transparent relationship with the principal. There is a high level of trust between the board of education and the principal. The superintendent serves as the primary communicator between the principal and the board of education. The members of the board of education stated that they believe that they must serve as role models to the rest of the district when it comes to discourse and collaboration. The astute board of education is committed to the best interest of the district and, in particular, the needs of the high school. It has, however, been expressed that the instability of the superintendent role has made it difficult to develop, fund, implement, and communicate long-range plans for programs and services, staffing, or technology. The positive relationship between the school board and principal allows collaboration and reflection in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

When there is stability in the superintendent role, this relationship will further be strengthened allowing students to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- school board

Standard 5 Indicator 12

Conclusions

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

The board of education members communicated that the school principal has earned and deserves their trust. They expressed that they have complete trust in her to manage the school and that she involves the board when needed. The principal of Ridgefield High School has the autonomy to plan, implement, and assess instruction in accordance with the district's learning expectations. She consistently collaborates with administration, teachers, district personnel, and community members to deliver the school's programs and services. She also has the authority to manage the school's budget, plan and implement professional development, maintain staffing, and provide communication between the school and parent community.

Therefore, the principal's autonomy and authority allow her to have sufficient decision-making authority and to move the school in the direction of the district's core values and 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 5 Commendations

Commendation

The safe, positive, respectful culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in high academic expectations for all students

Commendation

The positive relationships between teachers and students

Commendation

The wide variety of courses offerings that allows students the opportunity to access challenging academic courses

Commendation

The ample resources provided to support engagement in professional development

Commendation

The strong research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning

Commendation

The ample decision-making authority given to the principal that allows her to drive the school toward achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations

Commendation

The collaboration between the principal and the leadership team that allows for distributed leadership and autonomy in meeting the individual department needs

Commendation

The student load and class size that enable teachers to meet the learning needs of all students

Commendation

The collaborative relationship between the school board, principal, and superintendent that ensures students receive high-quality resources and opportunities

Commendation

Standard 5 Recommendations

Recommendation

Increase opportunities for students to connect with faculty and peers in a less competitive and more authentic manner to ensure that all students have a sense of shared ownership and school pride

Recommendation

Ensure that each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations

Recommendation

Increase the meaningful involvement of teachers, students, and parents in the decision-making processes in order to promote responsibility and ownership

Recommendation

Implement formal time on a regular basis for school-wide collaboration and discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning

Recommendation

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Standard 6 Indicator 1

Conclusions

Ridgefield High School (RHS) has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, that consistently support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

RHS has two pupil review teams (PRT1 and PRT2) to identify students who are in need of intervention whether they are students who already receive services or not. The PRT1 consists of administrators, guidance department, teen talk counselor, social worker, school psychologists, the alternate high school coordinator, the deans, and the department chairperson for special education. The PRT1 meets about students whose names have been put on a referral list by teachers. The team meets, discusses action steps, and then checks back at the next meeting to see if the actions are working. The PRT2 is a smaller group that meets when the interventions that are put in place are not working. RHS uses tiered interventions to support students with one-on-one writing conferences, tutors, pull-out instruction, and specialists. CLASS tutors are also used as an intervention strategy for all students that are in need of academic assistance.

The alternate high school has a referral process that is used to identify students who would benefit from the program. It is available to students who receive specialized services but can also be used by students who do not receive services if it is decided by a team that the student would benefit from the program. The learning independence for future endeavors (LIFE) program serves special education students before and after hospitalization. The program enables special education students to receive support with study skills lessons, anxiety issues, and human relations lessons in a small group setting. The teen talk counselor is in the building every day to intervene for all students who are in need or are in crisis offering students an opportunity to speak to a non-school employee. The library learning commons (LLC) provides academic support to students and the student life office supports students in their pursuit of extracurricular activities. In addition, a transition coordinator supports students with special education needs transition to post-secondary education or work.

The Ridgefield Intensive Special Education (RISE) program is an intensive special education program that provides interventions in the classroom. RISE program students have classes in an academic room and in a life skills room. Every student in the program has individualized lessons based on their needs, and they also integrate into mainstream classes based on their areas of strength. For example, students take part in art classes, music classes, science classes, and math classes that are co-taught. The program has an independent living classroom that is comprised of a stove, bed, washer, dryer, and basic living structure to provide support in basic living skills.

The high school has a tutor to provide support for English language learners (ELLs), and the district ELL coordinator conducts assessments of ELL students as needed across the district. The high school has a crisis team that can be used at any time during or after-school hours. It is comprised of the principal, assistant principals, deans, psychologists, social workers, chairperson of school counseling, a nurse, student life coordinator, student government faculty advisor, athletic director, coordinator of the alternative high school, grade level faculty advisors, school counselor, school resource officer, and the Ridgefield Police Department and town personnel as needed. The team intervenes and provides support in the case of a crisis or emergency that may affect the school. The team determines counseling needs, schedule and lesson support, individualized support, and communication plans for all involved or affected. After reacting and providing support in a crisis, the team self-assesses and decides if long-term response strategies are needed. A teen talk counselor, through a partnership with Kids in Crisis, is available daily during school hours and via a hotline after school hours. The teen talk counselor, school social worker, and school psychologists are crucial in identifying and supporting at-risk students and those students who are going unnoticed. The Endicott survey shows that 73 percent of staff are in agreement that the school has timely and coordinated strategies that meet the needs of all students.

Because there are timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies designed for all students, including those identified and at risk, students receive support that enables them to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- school support staff
- Endicott survey

Standard 6 Indicator 2

Conclusions

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

Sixty-nine percent of parents and 73 percent of teachers agree that the school provides information to families, and 64 percent of students know whom to go see if they need help. The school has a website that includes information regarding the course of studies, upcoming events, and other important school-related information. Support services personnel meet with parents and provide information face to face. Much of the information that they provide is through meetings with parents. They provide available community services, crisis/emergency services, and assistance with the process of applying for free and reduced lunch. They also have a page on the school's website that details the many interventions, resources, and supports that are available to all students. Events held by the school counseling department include parent coffee, course planning presentations, and senior parent open house for college planning purposes. Parent-counselor chats, in coordination with the delivery of the curriculum in the counseling classroom, occur twice a year and are offered both in the morning and in the evening. Parents and students also have access to Naviance and PowerSchool that provide information about college planning, scholarship opportunities, internships, assignments, and grades. The counseling department has recently developed a Google Classroom for each grade level as an easily accessible platform to disseminate information to students and parents. PTSA news blasts, RHS Twitter accounts, and the RHS newsletter are used to provide immediate communication regarding important information and events.

The families of special education students receive progress reports regarding IEP interventions on a quarterly basis. The transition counselor provides information for middle school students with special education needs transitioning to high school and for high school seniors transitioning to post-secondary. PPT meetings are scheduled and information regarding services is provided to parents. All freshmen receive orientation regarding support services at the beginning of the year. Freshman and senior students take a health class that incorporates information about support services as well as provides support to students through the curriculum. Teachers are expected to make parent contact regularly as part of their evaluation model focusing on parent communication. It is expected that parents will be contacted when there is a need but also to report positive accolades.

The library learning commons (LLC) has a page on the school's website that is used to support students and parents by providing them access to library resources. They also use social media platforms to highlight events and activities occurring in the LLC. The nurses provide information to families via district websites and through individual parent contact.

Because the school provides information to parents both in person and via technology regarding support services, families are able to access support that will increase students' achievement of the school's learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- school support staff
- Endicott survey
- school website

Standard 6 Indicator 3

Conclusions

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

Google Classroom is used in every department by all staff members to communicate information to students and for students to submit assignments, schedule appointments, and communicate with staff. The LLC is innovative with its incorporation of the latest technology. They use virtual reality technology, alternate reality technology, robotics, a green screen, MERGE Cubes, and escape rooms. Students are able to check out technological devices including Chromebooks, iPads, and Kindles, and they can use the library media rooms for group study sessions and presentations. They also have assistive technology for students who are in need of such services, including speech to text devices, Google Read&Write, Dayboard, mobility devices, and other communication devices. The LLC provides learning databases to students and staff to assist students with research, projects, and assignments.

The counseling department uses a Google Classroom for each grade level as well as Twitter and a QR code for scheduling purposes. Naviance is used by counseling staff and teaching staff to manage students' success plans and to keep students on track for post-secondary planning. PowerSchool is used by staff to document student information regarding parental and student contact, behavior, and academic progress. Students and parents can access grades, assignments, and attendance. The nurses log student visits via the SNAP health portal and track immunizations and document screening information. They also access PowerSchool to upload health care plans and medical alerts for teachers to view.

Since RHS support staff use technology to deliver an effective range of services, students' specific needs are being met and they are supported in the achievement of the school's learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- school support staff
- school website

Standard 6 Indicator 4

Conclusions

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

The Endicott survey indicates that 69 percent of the staff believes that the school has sufficient certified/licensed counseling personnel and support staff. While they have an adequate number of counselors, nine counselors serve approximately 1,622 students in grades 9-12, their availability is limited by other duties, such as hall walking duty, library duty, and lunch duty. School counselors spend a lot of time on twelfth grade college planning in the fall and with freshman transition procedures and issues. In addition to the school counselors, there are three school psychologists, one social worker at RHS, and one social worker at Ridgefield's alternative high school who provide individual and group counseling, as well as social skills instruction for identified students based on their IEP goals and objectives or Section 504 Plans. They implement interventions for students at risk, work with students who receive alcohol or drug-related infractions and conduct crisis and threat assessments. The school social worker and school psychologists are also available to all students for individual support and are available to work with staff and families for consultation and support. Three full-time administrative assistants provide support for the counseling department as well as the school psychologists and social workers.

The counseling curriculum, developed in 2017, is implemented in the counseling lab. Through this program, counselors meet with students at each grade a minimum of two times yearly, and two counselors teach the curriculum to the students. The curriculum focuses on the needs specific to each grade level. For example, the ninth grade curriculum focuses on transitioning to the high school, bullying, and study skills, while twelfth grade focuses on post-secondary topics and skills. In addition to the counseling classroom, counselors meet with students by appointment or drop in. They see each student for scheduling at least once a year, and they have recently adjusted the way they handle scheduling appointments by creating an appointment QR code that students can access at any time. This is one way that they have addressed student and parent perceptions regarding their availability. There is a counseling lab that is available and staffed throughout the entire school day for students to drop into and access a guidance counselor. There are also laptops available to students while they are in the counseling lab.

Counselors refer students to a plethora of outside resources including the teen talk counselor, the 211 Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services (EMPS), private counselors, and social service agencies. One of the counselors is a member of the regional crisis team and sits in on monthly meetings. The school counseling department frequently uses a variety of data to assess and improve services as needed. They review standardized test data, graduation rates, college enrollment rates, Naviance, as well as Advanced Placement test rates to identify issues and challenges for students in achieving learning. Naviance data is used to help students identify colleges that are an appropriate academic fit for them.

Because the school counseling department has an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who deliver a written developmental program; meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career and college counseling; systematically engage in individual and group meetings with all students; deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers; and use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, the department is able to meet the individual learning needs of students.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- students
- parents
- school support staff
- Endicott survey

Standard 6 Indicator 5

Conclusions

The RHS health office has an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who consistently provide direct, preventative and ongoing care to the students in the school; use an appropriate referral process; and conduct ongoing student health assessments. However, they do not yet use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

There are three full-time registered nurses at Ridgefield High School who provide preventative health and direct intervention services to the school's 1,622 students. The Endicott survey indicates 67 percent of the students are comfortable with going to the nurses' office. The current health suite meets the needs for privacy as well as for individual student care. The nurses collaborate with the athletic director and trainers on sports-related injuries, safety issues, and returning to play after injury. The three-full time nurses provide direct medical care for illness and accidents along with the necessary documentation. The health office uses the SNAP Health Care program to log health visits, track immunizations, document screening information. In addition, they use PowerSchool to upload health care plans, and flag life-threatening conditions for staff.

The nurses are involved in ongoing health care throughout the school year. Nurses collaborate with counselors and attend PPTs and 504 meetings when appropriate. One nurse serves on the school-wide crisis team. The nurses also participate with the re-entry of students who have been absent due to hospitalization, illness, or injury, write the health plan, and ensure implementation based on a physician's recommendations to deliver accommodations appropriate to students' medical conditions. The school nurses regularly use health assessment data to identify, evaluate, and address needs related to health issues within the school community. For example, in response to the prevalence of vaping, physical education and health department teachers collaborated with the nursing staff and community resources to provide vaping cessations clinics and support for students who want to quit vaping.

The nurses use some informal assessment data to identify and address needs related to health issues as well as to complete surveys required by the state of Connecticut, but they do not yet seek feedback from the school community to improve services.

Because the school's health office has an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who consistently provide direct, preventative and ongoing care to the students in the school; use an appropriate referral process; and conduct ongoing student health assessments, the school is able to address the health needs of its students which enables students to focus on their learning goals. When the school formalizes a means of gathering relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, the health office will be able to improve services to ensure that each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 6 Indicator 6

Conclusions

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

Two certified/licensed library/media specialists, two full-time paraprofessionals, and one technology integrator provide myriad services in the school's large library learning commons (LLC). The LLC is open daily from 6:40 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The library media specialists consistently work and plan for integrating information skills and curriculum to address and meet students' learning needs across the grade levels. The library/media specialists meet with department heads and individual teachers to plan collaborative lessons that engage and assist students with independent learning and research needs. Additionally, the library/media specialists use the information gained from these meetings to create research sheets with hot links on the LLC website. The LLC website has a wide variety of databases, hot links, and research tools organized and bookmarked so that the resources are readily accessible and identifiable for students and staff working on individual and group projects. Based on informal feedback, recent changes to the library facility have addressed the need to make the space more inviting by taking out the tall bookshelves, adding more flexible furniture to accommodate students during free periods, creating presentation spaces, and adding more study carrels and soft seating. The library/media specialists have arranged this furniture to provide sections of the library that are dedicated to independent study and other areas for collaborative work. The updates to the physical space have made the space more welcoming. The LLC host events involving the chess club, and the robotics students have had mini-competitions that have encouraged more students to see the space in a positive light.

As research needs continually change, and in part because of the rollout of one-to-one technology, the library/media specialists have been proactive in creating space and innovative programs that include fun technology such as Sphero and Cozmo robots for coding, MERGE Cubes, Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) bank that allows students to experience lessons enhanced by this type of technology. The library/media specialists work with the technology integrator developing lessons, providing support and assistance to teachers and staff to create more innovative and engaging technology-enriched lessons for students. There are three teaching classrooms within the LLC. The Mark Twain Room is equipped with 28 Chromebooks and a presentation board; the Toni Morrison Room has 25 Chromebooks and seven televisions; and the LLC Workroom has one television, 18 iPads, and nine Chromebooks. Students use the LLC extensively during their free periods and report that they go there to work on projects, homework, and sometimes to simply take a break from the rigors of the classroom.

Library/media personnel are responsive to students' interests and needs, engaging readers through book giveaways, author visits, and frequently changing displays. Puzzles and chess boards are available for students to exercise their brains during their free periods. The library/media specialists conduct faculty and community surveys to determine potential library needs. For example, in 2016-2017 an LLC climate survey was administered, and the library/media specialists regularly review usage statistics for databases, reference eBooks, and print resources.

Because the library/media services are often integrated into curriculum and instructional practices and have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who are actively engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum; provide a wide range of materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum; ensure that the facility is available and staffed for students and teachers before, during, and after school; are responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning; and conduct ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school

community, to improve services, the LLC is a highly functional learning hub for the school affording students and teachers myriad resources in support of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- central office personnel
- school support staff
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 6 Indicator 7

Conclusions

There is an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff to consistently provide support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners who regularly collaborate with all teachers, counselors, related service providers, and other support staff and provide inclusive learning for all students. However, ongoing assessment using data and feedback from the community is rarely used to ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

There are 14 special education teachers, one speech and language pathologist, and ten paraprofessionals at RHS. District staff that provide services include two occupational therapists, one physical therapist, one transition coordinator, one assistive technology specialist who is housed at RHS, and one English language learner coordinator. There is also a special education coordinator for the district. Ridgefield Public Schools also contracts additional employees to provide services at the high school including a teen talk social worker, board-certified behavior analyst, visually impaired teacher, and audiologist. According to the Endicott survey, 60 percent of staff and 59 percent of parents of students agree that the school has adequate, certified support services personnel for identified students, including special education, 504, and English language learners. Sixteen percent of staff and 24 percent of parents are undecided. The school and district are committed to providing students with the services they need in order to participate in learning at RHS. For example, the school employs two full-time certified nursing assistants (CNAs) to support two students who require full-time nursing care.

Certified/licensed personnel and support staff often collaborate during the pupil review team meetings, 504, PPT, and case review meetings. The PRT monitors all students, even those who are not identified when a staff member alerts the team that a student is displaying academic, social, or attendance needs. Special education teachers also use Google Forms and Sheets to collect both academic and behavior data from staff members who work with identified students in order to monitor student progress and needs. Students with a 504 Plan are collaboratively monitored by classroom teachers and school counselors, and a formal review of needs occurs at least once a year. Annual reviews, triennial re-evaluations, interim evaluations, and PPT meetings are held to review and revise accommodations, modifications, and learning needs. Inclusive learning opportunities are provided through the purposeful development of co-taught classrooms. RHS has increased the number of co-taught classes to focus on inclusivity. The RISE program has inclusive opportunities for special education students to enroll in co-taught classes in an area of academic strength or interest. The alternate high school recognizes that there is a need for a stronger program to be in place to transition students back into the high school after progress and goals have been achieved in the alternative setting. CLASS tutors and an ELL tutor are provided for students who are in need of additional academic support, and the LIFE program also supports students academically as well as behaviorally and emotionally. There is no formal ongoing assessment of the program of support for identified students.

As a result of the adequate number of dedicated and involved certified/licensed personnel and support staff, identified students have the support necessary to help them succeed in meeting educational goals and learning expectations. When the school develops a means of performing ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, support services personnel will have the information they need as they seek to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- school support staff

- Endicott survey
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 6 Commendations

Commendation

The myriad intervention strategies that support all students in meeting the school's learning expectations

Commendation

The multiple ways of communicating information to families through the use of face-to-face interaction, websites, and social media

Commendation

The use of Google Classroom consistently throughout departments to provide information to students

Commendation

The innovative and engaging technology embedded lessons and materials developed through the LLC that are not only highly engaging to students but that address 21st century learning

Commendation

The counseling department's creation of the counseling classroom to deliver curriculum that addresses grade-level specific needs

Commendation

The health office that is proactive in its collaboration with teachers and staff to create appropriate programs to address contemporary teen health and medical issues, as well as social and emotional issues

Commendation

The updated configured physical space to provide for a variety of learning modalities in the library learning commons (LLC)

Commendation

The numerous support services professionals available to all students

Standard 6 Recommendations

Recommendation

Ensure ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations in school counseling services, library/media services, health services, and special education/support services

Recommendation

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Recommendation

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Standard 7 Indicator 1

Conclusions

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

Ridgefield High School provides its student population of approximately 1,600 students with dependable funding for a wide range of school programs and services. According to the Endicott survey, nearly 62 percent of parents believe that the community provides dependable funding for programs and services while 64 percent agree that it provides dependable funding for staffing. In 2018-2019, the Ridgefield community and the board of education approved a budget with a 2.55 percent increase over the previous year. The school employs 118 teachers, with a teacher-to-student ratio of 1:14. Support staff, including psychologists, nurses, library/media specialists, school counselors, special educators, and paraprofessionals are sufficient to provide a wide range of school programs and services.

Ridgefield High School has a large range of academic and extracurricular courses. According to the Endicott survey, 79 percent of students believe that their school offers a wide range of programs and services. New programs, and classes are constantly being developed and the district helps fund these opportunities for the students. Administrators are very responsive to the needs of new courses and curricula.

Teachers are provided flexibility and support in designing teaching spaces to be welcome learning environments with a variety of chairs, desks, tables of varying heights and sizes, as well as lighting. One example of this is the sanctuary room in the library. When students were asked what features of Ridgefield High School they like the most, students were very proud of the new music technology lab. Students and staff stated that the central office truly invested 100 percent in making this new technology lab state-of-the-art. Another example is the AP Music Theory class that was funded and implemented during the current school year. Thirty varsity sports and 75 total athletic teams are offered at Ridgefield High School. Fifty percent of the student body is involved in athletics with a budget that is built annually using a zero-based approach.

RHS teachers have seven full days and five early release days dedicated to professional development, and funding is provided for teachers to participate in professional development in the form of workshops and conferences outside of the district. Funding is also set aside for curriculum development, review, and revision during the summer. In the summer of 2019, curriculum for five new courses was written, and 21 existing courses were revised and transferred to the new curriculum template.

Students report they have no lack of resources in the district. Teachers report the budget provides for a full range of technological support, as well as sufficient materials and supplies. Technology support is responsive with supporting whatever technology staff cannot cover in their budget. Training for new technology is apparent. Ridgefield has a technology coordinator that helps embed professional development within the school day. Classroom technology does get updated, for example, many classrooms have new ViewSonic television screens and all SMARTBoards are being turned into smart televisions. Teachers can acquire technology assistance quickly with a work tech ticket. Professional development for the new television screens is scheduled for election day.

There are several groups and initiatives in place to support students including Ridgefield Community Coalition Against Substance Abuse (RCCASA), Ridgefield Youth Commission; Project Resilience (i.e., parent programs on vaping, positive body image, drug and alcohol use); teen talk counselors to address mental and emotional issues, family and school issues, conflict-related issues; Compassion Community Initiative (to address inappropriate online behavior & vandalism); and Device-Free Family Dinner.

Because the community and the district's governing body provide dependable funding for a wide range of school

programs and services, sufficient professional and support staff, ongoing professional development and curriculum revision, a full range of technology support, sufficient equipment, and sufficient instructional materials and supplies, the faculty and staff at Ridgefield High School have the tools they need to support students in achieving the school's learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 7 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Ridgefield High School develops, plans, and funds programs to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant; to properly maintain, catalog, and replace equipment, and to keep the school clean on a daily basis. However, there are concerns about uneven heating and cooling throughout the building and a very noisy HVAC system that frequently interrupts lessons.

According to the Endicott survey, 92 percent of staff, 80 percent of students, and 91 percent of parents agree that the school building is clean and well maintained. Classrooms and common areas are clean and safe environments.

A work-order system is in place and teachers report that IT staff and custodial staff respond promptly to technology or building repair needs. The facilities department report that adjustments can be made when work orders are submitted for heating and cooling concerns, and that the maintenance department works around teacher/staff schedules by conducting maintenance early in the morning or late in the day. Faculty and staff report that work orders for repair in the classroom are generally addressed in less than 24 hours, with the exception of work orders submitted due to noisy heating and cooling vents that receive limited attention.

Recent renovations in summer 2019 at RHS include the replacement of the gymnasium floor, two new scoreboards in the gymnasium, a new stage floor in the auditorium, and student restrooms that were fully renovated with new piping, ADA compliant stalls, and vaping sensors (two in each renovated restroom). Other restrooms, including those in the locker rooms and faculty restrooms, are still in need of renovations.

The building's boiler system is 20 years old. The building's heating and cooling system is fully automated, and every room is monitored by a computer system. According to facilities staff, the heating and cooling systems were cleaned in summer 2019; and while filters and belts are maintained, the system may make noise even when working at its best. However, students, staff, and parents all express concern about extreme temperatures that impact teaching and learning. For example, some teachers turn on window-installed air conditioner units in the winter because the rooms are so hot. Noise is another concern. The heating and cooling system is loud in many classrooms and often impedes student learning. Students stack textbooks on the vents to muffle the sound, and one teacher employs a technique they call "gather around the dinner table" to bring the students in close around one table to enable students to hear the lesson when the system turns on.

Additional areas that are in need of repair are identified and scheduled. The concrete sidewalk outside of the staff lounge is in need of repair and is scheduled for the spring of 2020. A recent ADA compliance report cited two needs for auditorium renovations: emergency lights in the aisles and an ADA compliance hearing impaired system.

Because Ridgefield High School develops, plans, and funds programs to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant; to properly maintain, catalog, and replace equipment, and to keep the school clean on a daily basis, the school is a comfortable, safe, clean environment that is generally conducive for teaching and learning. When issues with HVAC noise and inconsistent temperatures across the building are resolved, the teaching and learning environment will be enhanced.

Sources of Evidence

- facility tour
- teachers
- students
- parents

- department leaders
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 3

Conclusions

The Ridgefield School District has developed a strategic five-year plan, that addresses some facility and athletic needs, as well as capital improvements; however, the school and district have not yet developed a long-range plan that addresses programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, and technology.

According to the Endicott survey, less than 40 percent of staff believe that the school has a long-range plan in place to address facilities, future programs, services, staffing levels, and capital improvements.

The district's strategic planning committee, made up of teachers and administrators from each school, parents, central office personnel, the board of education, and town personnel addresses some long-range high school needs. The capital improvement plan addresses long-range high expenditure items and is updated every year. The school includes building maintenance items in its annual budget requests, and the athletic department has a uniform rotation schedule. The athletic director works with the town to create a five-year capital and large equipment plan, but there is no guarantee that all items will be funded when needed. There is a ten-year enrollment projection created in 2016 that is available for planning. Generally, the high school administrators examine enrollment for the coming year to determine staffing needs.

The capital improvement plan includes replacing the infrastructure of the high school. The school has been looking at opportunities to be more energy efficient. The heating and ventilation system is twenty years old. They have two boilers; one that serves the old portion of the building and the other for the newer addition. The capital improvement plan also includes all of the technology servers and networking for the building. However, there is no long-range technology plan in place. The district has funded a gradual roll-out of one-to-one Chromebooks. Currently, ninth through eleventh grade students have Chromebooks, and next year all students in the school will have them. Students report there is no lack of technology resources, and that the Chromebooks are convenient for both students and teachers. According to the Endicott survey, 80 percent of students believe that RHS has a sufficient amount of computers available for student use and that these computers are available to them before, during, and after school hours.

Although the school and district have not yet developed a long-range plan that addresses programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, and technology, the district's strategic plan, capital improvement plan, and proactive yearly planning has enabled Ridgefield High School to meet its teaching and learning needs. When the district funds and the school implements a comprehensive long-range plan, funding for programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements may be more consistent.

Sources of Evidence

- facility tour
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

Standard 7 Indicator 4

Conclusions

Faculty and building administrators are actively involved in the development of the budget, but teachers are less involved in its implementation.

The budget process begins in the fall for the following school year and is based on an established amount per pupil that is allocated for the high school. The principal reports that she is sometimes able to negotiate for a higher per-pupil amount. The board of education bases budget decisions on needs regarding security, transportation, curriculum, enrollment, as well as town agreement. The superintendent's decision-making is based on communication with the principal, who works directly with individual department chairs to determine needs. The facilities director reports that their decision-making is based on input from custodians and building directors. Academic departments have flexibility in creating priorities, and each department receives a three percent increase in its budget each year. Large budget items such as professional development, curriculum writing, special education, and textbooks for new courses are addressed in the central office budget. Replacement textbooks are part of the school's budget. The athletics department has a zero-based budget. Two-thirds of the athletic budget is funded by the board of education; the remaining one-third is funded via user fees. The budget has consistently passed for the past five years with increases averaging about three percent.

There are faculty concerns on the budget process. According to the Endicott survey only 19 percent of faculty report having input in the development of the budget. While teachers can submit budget requests, the teachers have little knowledge of what gets purchased until the materials arrive in the fall. Additionally, allocated funds are driven by student enrollment, not to help grow a program. Staff looking to grow their programs feel limited.

There is a general agreement among faculty that requests for instructional materials and supplies are granted. However, teachers want to be more involved in the budget decision-making process. While budget cuts are communicated through the principal to the department chairs, teachers report that it is a mystery as to which materials are approved until materials arrive, and why other materials are not approved. Teachers expressed that they are not aware of the amount of money allocated per year per teacher for professional development. Teachers also report that the returning professional development consultants are often ineffective in meeting their professional learning needs.

When building administrators and faculty are actively involved in both the development and implementation of the budget, there will be a more complete understanding and prioritizing of district, department, and staff needs.

Sources of Evidence

- teacher interview
- teachers
- parents
- school board
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 5

Conclusions

The Ridgefield High School site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services.

According to the Endicott survey, 82 percent of Ridgefield High School students believe that the school's facility adequately supports its programs and services which include classrooms, science labs, computer labs, the library/media center, gymnasium, auditorium, cafeteria, and school counseling office space. Eighty-seven percent of parents believe that the school's physical plant is conducive to education. Seventy-nine percent of staff at the Ridgefield High School agree that the school's physical plant and site support the delivery of high quality programs and services. Most teachers feel that their teaching spaces are sufficient, that they have spaces they are pleased with and need. Classrooms are spacious and enable and support appropriate instruction. Music teaching spaces have been enhanced recently, and the program is growing. Because of the growth of their program and the growth of the entire visual and performing arts department, storage space is lacking. The district recently invested in a fully-equipped, state-of-the-art music technology lab. There is a wide range of academic and extracurricular courses that students can take. Science labs are well-equipped with all of the equipment they need, and storage space is adequate. Students are extremely proud of the math and writing labs, and the resources available for students struggling with academics.

There is a student life office (SLO) that consists of a teacher stipend position as the coordinator, and two administrative assistants. This office is in charge of all field trip opportunities, student identification badges, the advisory curriculum and they also oversee all clubs. The school counseling suite and the health services suite are spacious, welcoming, and fully supplied to meet the needs of students.

The quality of the food in the cafeteria at Ridgefield High School is a source of pride for all stakeholders. Many staff members mentioned that instead of going out to eat, they would rather purchase food from the cafeteria. According to the food services director, he tries to make things homemade as much as possible to save costs and to make the food healthier. Locally grown foods are purchased frequently as well.

Because the RHS site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services, students are supported in their efforts to practice and achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- panel presentation
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- Endicott survey

Standard 7 Indicator 6

Conclusions

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

RHS's documentation is managed through the facilities office. All facilities staff receive annual training for HAZMAT, AHERA, OSHA compliance, and health and safety. All hazardous chemicals are annually inventoried by the district's environmental consultants and recorded. All fire and safety repairs and testing records are managed through the facilities office and filed with the appropriate local and state departments. Tests for radon, mold, air quality, asbestos, and air emissions are done on a continuous basis in accordance with specific filing dates with state and federal offices. Chemicals are safely stored on-site and inventoried annually. All expired hazardous materials are removed as required.

RHS makes every effort to ensure that the physical plant and facilities have the necessary accommodations to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Common areas and teaching spaces are handicap accessible. An ADA audit report in the summer of 2019 suggested items for updating and renovation, including adding emergency lights to the aisles of the auditorium, installing an ADA-compliant hearing impaired system, and installing appropriate door handles in some classrooms. During recent restroom renovations, a stall was removed in each restroom in order to meet ADA standards. All renovations are driven by an ADA mindset. Emergency exits include areas of refuge with an intercom at each floor. There are two elevator shafts, one at each end of RHS.

Because documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations, the health and safety of students and staff are ensured and the plant and facilities support teaching and learning.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- students
- school leadership

Standard 7 Indicator 7

Conclusions

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

According to the Endicott survey, nearly 87 percent of the professional staff at RHS believe they engage parents and families as partners in each student's education. Fifty percent of parents agree with how the staff characterizes this partnership. Teachers and staff are encouraged to reach out frequently to all families. Administrators report Ridgefield High School reaches out to those parents that are less involved often. For example, the dean of students calls home whenever he speaks to a student, the PTA runs programs for the parent community on topics such as stress and anxiety reduction, the school creates newsletters, and teachers call home every week to build relationships with all families. Teachers are encouraged while writing their yearly student learning objective (SLO) goals, to include a parent connection and communication piece. Implementation of Google Classroom in the daily classroom curriculum is required for all teachers.

The PTSA hosts an annual membership drive, although there is rolling admission. Membership is publicized on the school's website, face-to-face requests, and outreach to eighth grade parents. Parents are also contacted directly during club, sport, or other specific activities. The school counseling office shares information with the PTSA, such as grade-level specific information, scholarships, and financial aid. School counseling uses the PTSA by sharing information that the PTSA can promote. Also, parts of the Ridgefield High School's website is updated occasionally.

Because the school's professional staff frequently work to engage parents and families as partners in each student's education and reach out to specifically those families who have been less connected with the school, students are supported as they practice and achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- Endicott survey

Standard 7 Indicator 8

Conclusions

Ridgefield High School consistently develops productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning.

According to the Endicott survey, 80 percent of the professional staff at RHS believe that the school has effective partnerships with parents, community organizations, businesses, and higher education to support student learning. Sixty-four percent of parents agree with this characterization. Community partnerships at RHS are plentiful. The board of education, the board of finance, and the community work very well together to support the district. The board of education will financially support initiatives if they are given sufficient reasoning, and the community is educated with supporting data on why and how funds benefit RHS students. RHS student government works closely with town government and local businesses, and local businesses regularly donate items for school events. Local business also works closely with other clubs such as Key Club and DECA. A strong partnership with the police department exists. For example, last year the students planned to participate in a walk-out to support an end to gun violence, and when the administration was concerned about student safety, the chief of police said he would provide funding for the police backup.

Clubs and activities also highlight successful partnerships. Examples related to the arts include frequent theatre and dance opportunities and programs through Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Ridgefield. Tiger Hollow Inc. is a strong example of a community partnership. Tiger Hollow Inc is a local non-profit organization that built the athletic fields at Tiger Hollow on the campus of Ridgefield High School. These athletic facilities are used by the health and physical education department during the school day, the athletics office after school, and the community after 6:00 p.m.

Successful partnerships are evident throughout academics at RHS. One example is the senior internship program in which seniors complete a four-to-five week internship in May. Internship placement may take place locally, upstate Connecticut, or in New York City. The science department maintains a strong partnership with CREC to support their transitions to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). The transitions program for 18-to-21-year-old special education students maintains strong community and business partnerships. Business classes create partnerships with local businesses. Higher education partnerships include Early College Experience (ECE) courses, and teacher training, that enable students to earn UCONN credit for courses taken at RHS. Students can also earn college credit through partnerships with Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and the University of New Haven.

As a result of productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships, student learning is effectively supported.

Sources of Evidence

- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school board
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Commendations

Commendation

The continuous funding for programs, services, materials, and technology support

Commendation

The collaboration among the custodians, facilities administrators, and building administrators to maintain the physical plant and facilities to meet all applicable federal and state laws, and local fire, health, and safety regulations

Commendation

The funding of school safety items in the capital improvement plan

Commendation

The active involvement of administrators and department chairs in the budget process

Commendation

The extensive partnerships with community, businesses, and higher education

Commendation

The high quality programs and services supported by the school's physical site

Commendation

The range of methods in which teachers and staff communicate with parents including, but not limited to, PowerSchool, Google Classroom, the school's website, PTSA email blasts, and presentations

Commendation

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Commendation

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Standard 7 Recommendations

Recommendation

Develop, implement, and communicate long-range plans that address technology, facility needs, enrollment changes, and staffing needs to all faculty and staff

Recommendation

Increase communication with staff and teachers during the budget implementation process

Recommendation

Ensure adequate storage in the visual and performing arts department

Recommendation

Resolve uneven heating and cooling issues as well as issues of excessive noise generated by the HVAC systems throughout the school

Recommendation

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Recommendation

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Recommendation

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FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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

To ensure that it has current information about the school, the Commission has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Commission within sixty days (60) of occurrence any substantive change which negatively impacts the school's adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The report of substantive change must describe the change itself and detail any impact which the change has had on the school's ability to meet the Standards for Accreditation. The Commission's Substantive Change Policy is included on the next page. 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 team would like to express thanks to the community for the hospitality and welcome. The school community completed an exemplary self-study that clearly identified the school's strengths and areas of need. The time and effort dedicated to the self-study and preparation for the visit ensured a successful accreditation visit.

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

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

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

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

Roster of Team Members

Chair(s)

Chair: Dr. Linda Van Wagenen - New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.

Assistant Chair: Mary Devaney - Wolcott High School

Team Members

Tracey Acquarulo - West Haven High School

Marianne Adinolfi - East Haven High School

Olga Arbulu - North Haven High School

Kimberly Bodnar - New Britain High School

Stacey Delmhorst - Staples High School

Cori-Ann DiMaggio - Regional School District #13

Catherine Egan - Glastonbury High School

Angelica Fadrowski - East Lyme High School

Andrea Galuska - Avon High School

Jennifer MacKenzie - New Fairfield High School

Amy Maldonado - Middletown High School

Mary Reamer - Weston High School

Jessica Slater - Newington High School

Enzo Zocco - Mark T. Sheehan High School