

## **STANDARD ON CORE VALUES, BELIEFS, AND LEARNING EXPECTATIONS**

### **Narrative Essay**

The Amesbury High School community engages in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research-based best practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning. The establishment of Amesbury High School's Core Values, Beliefs on Learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations began in October 2011 and extended to February 2012, when the proposed document was accepted by the School Committee. The initial process began with two meetings involving fifty-four faculty members and three administrators. Parents and local residents were invited through Connect-Ed and personal invitations to three, open-forum discussions led by Core Value Development Committee chair Sarah Centric and the Dean of Students/Curriculum, Elizabeth McAndrews. The committee was comprised of two faculty members, two students, four parents, and the school principal. For student body representation, seventy-seven students from varying academic levels, grades, and social groups were invited to participate in an open discussion about Amesbury High School's Core Values, Beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations. Sixty-eight students attended the discussion and shared their views during a ninety-minute session. An Endicott survey was also opened for students, community, and staff responses, and development committee leaders accessed survey responses throughout the core values development process; however, the core values team determined that there was insufficient participation, and the data was not included in the development process.

On October 7, 2011, the first faculty meeting to develop Core Values, Beliefs on Learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations for Amesbury High School concentrated on understanding what core values, beliefs on learning, and learning expectations are and how they fit into the NEASC process. The process began with a review of the school's current mission

statement (renewed by the School Committee on May 16, 2011) by the faculty. The faculty worked in small groups and identified essential values displayed by students of Amesbury High School. This process evoked a feeling of pride as each group reviewed the student values that are currently evident at AHS. Each group came to the same conclusion and realized that the student body reflects beliefs and behaviors that are positive and admirable. The groups then shared key ideas with each other and responses were consolidated into a master list.

The faculty found that they had all identified similar traits displayed by AHS students. This result was an overwhelming portrayal of the positive nature and culture of AHS. The faculty's discussion resulted in the identification of seven key areas the group believed were essential to the high school's culture; these areas were not only evident in the existing culture of AHS, but they are traits that will continue to make AHS the positive, supportive, engaged community that they pride themselves on being.

At the second faculty meeting on November 10, 2011, the group continued its assessment of AHS's values. The faculty evaluated Amesbury High School's driving need for establishing learning expectations and discussed how those needs applied to the school. Faculty members reviewed the list created at the last meeting to continue discussing the importance and implication of each value. In small groups, the faculty then generated a list of "most important" factors for establishing students as 21st century learners and citizens upon graduating from Amesbury High School. The ideas generated continued to reflect the theme that the faculty and staff of AHS had already identified – personal investment, accountability, and engagement drive AHS's attitude and behavior.

These new lists were posted and discussed in both small and whole group work. Next, the faculty read and reviewed "Lesson 3" from the book *Ten Lessons on Leadership and Learning*,

by John D'Auria, and discussed examples of the effects of core values on a school's environment. The group protocol to derive Amesbury High School's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations was based on a strategy identified in the text *The Skillful Teacher*, by John Saphier, Maryann Haley-Speca, and Robert Gower. Small groups identified language they believed to be most powerful and discussed the importance of the various leadership traits outlined in the excerpt. The group evaluated and discussed the seven previously identified factors to further narrow and refine them. Throughout the process, the faculty focused on how to best represent the energy and investment students, faculty, and administration contribute to the school community. The faculty then established five primary areas that were considered the top priorities for student and school culture at Amesbury High School.

The next core value development meeting was held on November 16, 2011, with Amesbury's community members. The meeting facilitators explained the definition of core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and the NEASC process to the group. The group was then given the following prompt: *List five qualities and characteristics that we, as a school, hope to cultivate and develop in our students by the time they graduate.* Group members individually listed qualities and then shared them in small-group discussions. Although the group had a very productive meeting, the committee was disappointed because it felt that the number of parents attending the meeting was not representative of the level of involvement normally found at AHS. The parents who did attend were extremely invested, but the committee wanted a greater breadth of input in order to feel that the parents and community members had a true voice in the final document. Due to the low number of attendees, the members were asked to reach out to other people to encourage greater community participation in future meetings.

At the next meeting on December 13, 2011, the community members contributed further to the development of the Core Values, Beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations. The members generated a list of factors considered essential for students of Amesbury High School. This list was then compared to the faculty's list and discussed. The participants generated similar concepts to the faculty's list, and the group had a lively, passionate discussion about the importance of various characteristics of the school's culture. Additional ideas were added, and a combined version of the two was created, resulting in four core values: *Integrity, Responsibility, Academic Excellence, and Problem Solving*.

Next, the group read the current mission statement in order to generate ideas for the Beliefs on Learning narrative. In a group discussion, the members identified key aspects of the AHS Mission Statement that they felt should be preserved in the Beliefs on Learning narrative. Like the faculty, they, too, saw the qualities of the existing mission statement as similarly aligned with the parents' and faculty's developing attributes of core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. From their discussion and evaluation of the mission statement and the emerging core values, the group members formed the following statement: *Amesbury High School is committed to inspiring all its students to become problem solvers who take responsibility for themselves and their learning. In fostering this quest for excellence, the AHS community will support and work together with integrity, modeling tolerance, collaboration, and respect.*

On January 9, 2012, to continue developing the Core Values, Beliefs on Learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations, sixty-six students attended a forum and discussed their perspectives on school culture and expectations at Amesbury High School. They followed a process similar to the one the faculty and community members used to delineate key elements of core values and beliefs on learning. The students were pleased to have a chance to discuss their

perspective of AHS's culture. They had an opportunity to openly share and build upon one another's ideas to establish their own opinions on culture and expectations. Many of the same qualities identified by the faculty and parent groups were also identified by the students. This continuity in viewing the school as a positive, supportive environment reinforced the faculty's original assessment of the school's strengths. Students' responses were compared to the drafted core values and beliefs on learning and discussed. Students analyzed the document for its effectiveness in representing school culture, and the students' feedback was a request to include *respect for individuality* in the document. They felt that this was an essential element necessary for the success of students at AHS. The students believed that with the addition of *respect for individuality*, the statement of core values was a genuine and accurate embodiment of AHS's goals of nurturing students' fullest personal, civic, and academic potential.

A final core values development meeting occurred on January 11, 2012. This was the last opportunity for input from faculty, school, and community. The students' contribution was integrated into the existing draft to create an updated version of the Core Values and Beliefs on Learning document. The Core Values Development Committee then participated in small group discussions and developed 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations. They attempted to tie in all the elements embodied in the faculty, student, and parent discussions. The community group accepted the changes to the document and agreed that it should be presented to the faculty and school committee for approval.

On January 12, 2012, the draft of Core Values, Beliefs on Learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations was emailed to all staff for final suggestions and questions. Responses were due by January 16, 2012, for any changes to the content. With no changes suggested, the final version of the Core Values, Beliefs on Learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations

document was presented to the faculty on January 18, 2012, for approval and acceptance. The school committee was extremely impressed by the content of the document and considered it an authentic representation of what AHS signifies. They acknowledged and enthusiastically supported Amesbury High School's newly established Core Values, Beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations on February 7, 2012.

In order to quickly execute the new document, a Rubric Committee was then established, and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations were used to create school-wide rubrics that the committee distributed to the faculty for immediate implementation. Teachers immediately posted the core values in their classrooms, and they made it a priority to discuss the importance and goals of the document. The Core Values, Beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations are frequently included on classroom policies and referred to during classroom lessons to integrate them into the daily culture of the school.

In order to encourage awareness and investment in Amesbury High School's Core Values, Beliefs on Learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations, in September 2012, Amesbury High School students were given an opportunity to use their creative skills to design an appropriate logo that would reflect the AHS school culture and its current core values. In fashion with AHS's focus on student participation, the student body voted on the submissions, and the winner of the logo contest was announced on September 28, 2012. Shortly thereafter, teachers displayed the new logo in classrooms, and the Steering Committee and administration began planning ways to incorporate the logo in the school and throughout the local community.

Amesbury High School has challenging and measurable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations for all students which address academic, social, and civic competencies and are defined by school-wide analytic rubrics that identify targeted high levels of achievement. The rubric process

began with a call for volunteers to be stakeholders on January 24, 2012. This resulted in a committee consisting of participants from various content areas, including English, math, social studies, science, guidance, foreign language, and wellness. The committee began its work on February 7, 2012. During the initial meeting, the committee attempted to define the goals for its work which began with a review of AHS's existing school-wide rubrics. The committee established that the new rubrics should be concise, measurable, achievable, specific, and understandable to teacher, student, or parent. In addition to identifying the need for seven separate rubrics to correspond to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations, as identified in the School's Core Values and Beliefs on Learning, the committee discussed the format and content of the rubrics. The desire to develop a format which would allow the rubrics to be consistent and applicable across disciplines necessitated several discussions on the topic of an effective format for the new rubrics. After creating a rubric for academic expectation number one, the rubric committee submitted it to the Steering Committee on February 16, 2012, for analysis, revision, and approval of language and format. Once these guidelines were established, each member of the rubric committee was assigned a separate learning expectation and was tasked with creating its corresponding rubric. Rubrics for all of the learning expectations identified in the approved core values statement were developed, reviewed, and edited by the committee over the course of three separate meetings in March 2012 (6, 15, and 21). The completed rubrics were presented to, and approved by, the Steering Committee on March 26, 2012.

After the rubrics were accepted by the faculty at a professional development workshop on April 5, 2012, teachers began to incorporate the rubrics into their curriculum, lesson plans, and activities. Over the course of the next several months, these rubrics have served as a foundation

for lesson planning and assessment. Examples of their incorporation can be found in NEASC evidence.

Amesbury High School's Core Values, Beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations are reflected in the culture of the school, drive curriculum revision, instruction, and assessment, and are beginning to guide the development and revision of the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations. The culture of Amesbury High School reflects the school's Core Values, Beliefs on Learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations in many ways through participation in various honor societies, co-curricular activities, and community service organizations. Although Amesbury High School has many time-tested traditions, several student-driven innovations and initiatives have been incorporated into AHS's culture. Students recognize needs, advocate for change, and implement new programs, groups, or actions to address these needs. In an act completely initiated by the Peer Leaders Club, a challenge was issued to individual classrooms to compete in raising money to replace the food lost by a local food bank due to a power outage just before Thanksgiving. The classroom that raised the most money was treated to cider donuts from an Amesbury farm. As a result of this effort, AHS donated more than \$1400 to Our Neighbors' Table to replace the food lost during the outage. This has now become a yearly tradition known as The Turkey Challenge.

Spirit Week is just one of Amesbury High School's yearly traditions. This week-long event, occurring just before the Thanksgiving Day football game, incorporates many of AHS's core values including respect for individuality, responsibility, integrity, and problem solving. Each day offers both students and staff the opportunity to participate in the spirit and culture of the school by dressing up according to the daily themes. The food drive incorporates a twist that permits the students to display their creativity as well as their ability to problem solve. In this



competition, students have two ways to earn points for their class. The class that collects the most food items earns the most points, but more uniquely, each class must also build a structure out of the items collected. This problem-solving activity earns the class points toward their Spirit Week victory.

This year, town officials asked Amesbury High School students to participate in the Fireball Run. Universal Studio's "Race to Recover America's Missing Children," the country's largest and longest "active recovery effort" for missing and abducted children, was a town-wide event which included Amesbury High School students marching to the center of town on a cold and rainy Friday to cheer on the men and women involved in this recovery effort. School spirit and community support were evident in AHS's overwhelming participation in this event. The student body's tremendous level of participation was acknowledged by the event organizers, the Master of Ceremonies, and the Mayor.

Other examples of annual traditions that promote respect for individuality, responsibility, and integrity include student participation in Relay for Life, Mr. AHS, student-run sports rallies (typically four per year), the Talent Show, Lip Sync, Powder Puff football, Battle of the Bands, the Dodgeball Tournament, FrostFest, Blood Drives, Walk for Hunger, and Big Brother/Big Sister. Each of these activities has strong student participation and a high level of faculty support.

Academic Excellence is reflected in student involvement in many academic co-curricular activities such as Math and Science team events, High School Quiz show qualifying events, Select Choir, Bookworms Book Club, Art and Camera Club, and Literary magazine. In addition, Amesbury High School has an impressive number of students who are inducted into various

honor societies. The staff at Amesbury High School also rewards academic excellence, responsibility, respect for individuality, and integrity through its various awards, as listed in the Program of Studies.

Over the past several years, changes to curriculum have been made to further meet the needs of students at Amesbury High School. These adjustments have reflected the staff's understanding of, and appreciation for, Amesbury High School's Core Values, Beliefs on Learning and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations prior to their official adoption. Such offerings included Dual Enrollment college courses through Northern Essex Community College (NECC) and Salem State University; the Early College Program, which is a preparedness program that combines AHS staff with NECC staff in a cohort environment for the purpose of getting students college and career ready; and the Firehouse Internship. Recently, many staff members have made additions to the Program of Studies in their subject area as a result of student requests, interests, and needs. "Fostering this quest for excellence" has resulted in the addition of Forensic Science, Adaptive Physical Education, Musical Theater, Video Game Programming, Entrepreneurship, and Engineering, as listed in the Program of Studies.

During the spring and summer of 2012, many teachers revised their curricula in order to formally include the AHS Core Values, Beliefs on Learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations. Also, best practices and literacy strategies from Teaching and Learning Alliance (TLA), implementation of school-wide rubrics, and use of technology such as smart boards, interactive labs, overhead projectors, FM systems, flash drives, laptops, teacher websites, Aspen X2 grading program, document cameras, Weather Bug station, and a seismometer were also incorporated into the revised curriculum maps. Changes in assessment in response to the AHS

core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations include development of common assessments and school-wide rubrics in all core subject areas.

The Strategic Plan for the Amesbury Public School District was established as a set of guidelines and goals as determined by a committee comprised of district and building administrators, community members, teachers, parents, and students in 2006. A comparison of the current Core Values, Beliefs on Learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations and the Strategic Plan (2006-2011) as well as the superintendent's Entry Plan (2011-2012) revealed a consistent commitment to meeting each student's needs at the highest possible level as well as preparing students to be college and career ready. During the summer of 2013, a new Strategic Plan Committee will be created with the purpose of refocusing and rededicating Amesbury Public Schools to its mission.

Additionally, the principal of AHS has further embedded these core values into its school culture by developing two, 2012-2013 goals aimed at assisting the AHS school community in embracing and implementing the core values and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations:

Goal 1: By June 2014, 100 percent of teachers at AHS will be working collaboratively to explore instructional practices, transition to the common core curriculum, and utilize meaningful assessment data to analyze and improve student learning.

Goal 2: By June 2014, AHS will determine the needs of all students; establish support systems to intervene with influences interfering with student success, allowing 100 percent of student access to the curriculum to show a 5 percent growth in overall achievement by June 2014.

In addition, the AHS administration has identified for the staff a SMART goal as required by Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) that by June 1, 2013, each teacher will use at least one of the school-wide rubrics in three different assessments of student progress and will submit student work with a fully completed cover sheet as evidence of each rubric/assessment. Teachers on a two-year evaluation plan, in addition to the previously stated goal, will be required to use at least one of the school-wide rubrics in at least two more assessments of student progress and will be able to analyze and reflect on the results; how it informs instruction; and if necessary, makes adjustments to the curriculum. This goal will be accomplished between September 9, 2013, and June 1, 2014. With a focus on collaboration, the resources have been allocated to achieve these goals include curriculum writing workshops, professional development time, and Critical Friends groups. Amesbury High School's evidence that its Core Values, Beliefs on Learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations are incorporated into the community can be found in its student handbook, program of studies, strategic plan, district and school goals.

Amesbury High School regularly reviews and revises its Core Values, Beliefs on Learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations based on research, multiple data sources, and district and school community priorities. Amesbury High School's plan for the regular review of the Core Values, Beliefs on Learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations is to track student progress based on school-wide rubric assessments, MCAS scores, the percentage of students who are in honors classes and on the honor roll, Writing Assessment Team (WAT) scores, data from common assessments, co-curricular participation percentages, hours for community service, the school and district priorities as proposed by the most recent Strategic Plan, and any relevant educational research available at the time. The plan is to revisit school-wide rubrics and analyze

data that supports the core values. If data shows weaknesses in core values, the faculty and administration will identify causes as well as corrective actions. Faculty and administration will review collected data during scheduled faculty meetings, professional development days, and annual review following the release of MCAS scores.

## **STANDARD ON CORE VALUES, BELIEFS, AND LEARNING EXPECTATIONS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Amesbury High School community of parents, faculty, administrators, and students provided the input necessary for the development of the school's Core Values, Beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations. Several collaborative meetings involving parents, students, and faculty, in conjunction with an application of current research, was essential in creating a cohesive document representative of the core beliefs of Amesbury High School. The efforts of all the participants in creating this document were focused, reflective, honest, and productive. The school community has wholly embraced the principles embodied by the Core Values, Beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations document.

The creation of Amesbury High School's final Core Values, Beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations involved a variety of groups. The development of the core values was a collaborative process utilizing the input of the faculty, parents, and students. The Core Values Development Committee made a sincere attempt to encourage a variety of groups in the development of the document throughout the process. The final document represents the essential factors of Amesbury High School. The process was inclusive, reflective, and authentic.

The establishment of AHS's new school-wide rubrics began by reviewing the existing school-wide rubrics and assessing the needs of the school. The Rubric Committee spent many hours reviewing and comparing information and data to develop rubrics that best implemented the newly established Core Values, Beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations. The faculty began incorporating the rubrics into classroom assessments. The rubrics are becoming a common reference document when developing and revising classroom instruction and assessments.

Amesbury High School’s Core Values, Beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations directly reflect the school’s engaged, compassionate school community. The high number of student-initiated events and the large number of participants in school activities represent the school population’s investment in creating an inclusive, engaging environment. In addition, the strong student involvement in altruistic programs (such as the holiday food and toy drives, coat drive, and Rachel’s Challenge) shows the empathetic nature of the student body. The school’s academic excellence is reflected by students’ participation in the numerous honor societies and academic organizations in the school.

The school has a plan to regularly review data indicating the effectiveness of AHS’s Core Values, Beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations. Based on the findings, the school will make adjustments to ensure that the Core Values, Beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations continue to be demonstrated by the school community.

Based on the CPSS Rating Guide for the Standard on Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations, Amesbury High School judges its adherence to the Standard ACCEPTABLE.

Core Values Committee Members

- Kathy Beaudoin, Science Teacher, Co-Chair \_\_\_\_\_
- Dara Merz, English Teacher, Co-Chair \_\_\_\_\_
- Laurie Williams, Foreign Language Teacher \_\_\_\_\_
- Sarah Centric, Physical Education Teacher \_\_\_\_\_
- Adam Thibodeau, Special Education Teacher \_\_\_\_\_
- Susan Saurman, Guidance Counselor \_\_\_\_\_
- Glen Gearin, Administration \_\_\_\_\_

## **Statement of Strengths and Needs for Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations Standard**

### *Strengths*

- Teacher and student input into the Core Values, Beliefs on Learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations
- Teachers have embraced and implemented the school-wide rubrics
- Students played an active role in the design of the Core Values logo
- Challenging and measurable 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations
- Core Values accurately reflect the atmosphere of the school culture, drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom, and guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations
- Core Values and Beliefs on Learning posted throughout school
- Core Values and Beliefs on Learning are informed by current research
- Process designed to include stakeholders in the community in order to create a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process

### *Needs*

- Increase community and parent input in the on-going evaluation of Core Values, Beliefs on Learning and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations
- Assess the long-term results of the implementation of the Core Values
- Continue to implement analytical rubrics to provide the data to assess and revise curriculum
- Implement the formal process for the review of core values
- Connect strategic plan and core values



## **STANDARD ON CURRICULUM**

### **Narrative Essay**

The curriculum is purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Amesbury High School has clearly defined its 21st Century Learning Expectations and how these tie specifically to the core values. Prior to 2007, there was a consistent schedule for review, revision, and rewriting of curriculum. However, since 2007, there has been a lack of direction and coordination at the district level in continuing this process. Curriculum at Amesbury High School has not been consistently updated in the past six years. The district has had three different superintendents and three different curriculum directors during the past decade. In the spring of 2012, teachers of all subjects in the school took advantage of both professional leave time and paid non-school time to revise the curriculum.

This process began in the summer of 2011, when members of the English and math departments began unpacking the new Common Core standards. In order to familiarize all faculty members with the Common Core, a workshop was developed to establish department-specific essential questions.

Starting in the early spring of 2012, departments at Amesbury High School began updating and writing curriculum to align with the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations and Common Core Standards. This curriculum work is an ongoing process that has continued. Members of all departments have spent numerous hours achieving this alignment with the standards.

In the fall of 2012, a new departmental leadership model was implemented with the purpose of vertically aligning curriculum and suggesting professional development opportunities.

Teacher Leaders were introduced to oversee curriculum development and integration. These Teacher Leaders are separated into Subject Area Committees (SAC) by academic discipline, are overseen by a district administrator, and continue to meet monthly. Teacher Leaders in each discipline meet with Teacher Leaders from other buildings to develop, implement, and assess current curriculum and to align new curriculum with State Frameworks and the Common Core Standards.

Aspen, an on-line information management system, is used district-wide to coordinate many diverse tasks within each respective school. An important component of Aspen has been the linking of curriculum to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations and the Common Core. As of fall 2012, departments have uploaded school-wide curriculum into Aspen.

Aspen can also be accessed by parents and students to track academic progress. The program provides a window to teacher grade-books. Homework, classwork, attendance, and test and quiz scores can be accessed, providing students with a current snapshot of their grades. Aspen also contains “lockers” in which students can store work, download documents from teachers, and upload completed assignments for credit.

In addition to Aspen, Amesbury High School utilizes many technological resources that assist in the learning of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. The use of document cameras allows students and teachers to interact on assignments and instruction in a practical way. Teacher websites can also be accessed to view homework and to track long-term assignments. In addition to these tools, Amesbury High School has both PC and Mac labs for increased student learning of technology, website design, animation, digital photography, and research.

The district’s curriculum is written in a common format that includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content and skills; the schools 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations;

instructional strategies, and assessment practices that include the use of school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics. All departments revised their curricula in a common format in Aspen which allows teachers to access, update, and improve their curriculum on an on-going basis. The new curriculum format includes essential questions, essential understandings, essential skills, growth activities, instructional strategies, access to print and digital resources, formative assessments, and summative assessments tied to each unit of study. The school's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations and the Common Core standards are incorporated into each unit of study.

In the spring of 2012, Amesbury High School developed and adopted a set of school-wide rubrics for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations. Each department will take primary responsibility for at least one expectation and secondary responsibility for additional expectations. It has yet to be decided which department will assume the main responsibility for which expectations, but all teachers are encouraged to use any and all rubrics that apply to their assignments. These expectations will be integrated into future student assessments.

In order to ensure a greater adherence to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations, the Backwards Design method was used in rewriting the curriculum. Essential questions and understandings were developed for each unit. The essential questions and understandings drove the development of essential skills, growth activities, and instructional practices used in each unit. Formative and summative assessments were developed to evaluate student understanding and progress.

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, and informed and ethical use of technology. The curriculum at Amesbury High School is one that offers its students a high level

of education for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations. As of September 2012, the Amesbury High School curriculum can be accessed via Aspen. The curriculum's effectiveness and rigor is achieved by offering courses that involve authentic learning opportunities, higher-order thinking skills, inquiry and problem-solving skills, informed use of technology, and cross disciplinary learning that emphasizes a depth of student understanding and applicable knowledge.

Higher-order thinking, inquiry, and problem solving are all expectations of courses offered in classes at Amesbury High School. Classes are often intentionally aligned with other disciplines to heighten academic application and student performance. Some examples include an anatomy and physiology unit developed with a physical education teacher that explores exercise physiology; Geology and Local Connections teachers have developed an integrated unit of study that explores the geologic history of the Merrimack Valley; and, beginning in 2006, the American Studies program was developed to synthesize American literature and American history into two formally co-taught courses.

A cross-disciplinary connection exists between English Language Arts in grades 9, 10, and 11 and foreign language. This allows for student understanding and application to increase, as they are shown that similar grammar principles apply regardless of the language being taught. This type of cross-disciplinary learning opportunity culminates with the Senior Research Project where students select research topics from a variety of academic and practical areas. Some students seek out staff within the building to assist them with research to achieve a more authentic experience.

Students are challenged to use higher-order thinking skills to problem solve across the curriculum. Students at multiple levels are encouraged to apply these problem solving skills to their own lives and to real-world scenarios. Students gain practical and authentic learning

experiences, both in and out of school, through a variety of opportunities. In the spring of 2012, the Anatomy and Physiology curriculum was redesigned incorporating case studies where systems knowledge is continually applied. The entrepreneurship courses create numerous opportunities for students to develop their own businesses from the ground up. The American Studies visits Boston's Freedom Trail and the mayor's office in Amesbury Town Hall annually. Lowell's Boat Shop of Amesbury, MA works in conjunction with Local Connections and mathematics students to provide authentic learning experiences. In Child Development class, students take a "Baby Think it Over" home which simulates the real life demands of a child. Health class includes use of "beer goggles" to replicate the impact of alcohol or other chemicals on vision and physical impairment. Language classes require students to role play "daily life" skits. Big Brother/ Big Sister offers students opportunities to learn about areas of interest for future employment. This fall, students in the various art classes were responsible for all aspects of being a part of Amesbury's Studio Tours.

Following the official end of the school day, students have the opportunity to participate in an athletic training course where students work directly with the school's athletes under the supervision of the athletic trainer. In order to further ensure students' access to authentic learning opportunities outside of the academic setting, Amesbury High School provides students access to more than thirty co-curricular school groups, through school to career opportunities, and through academically competitive groups such as Math Team, Science Team, and the PBS Quiz Bowl. The yearbook, AHS Powwow, is a unique experience which combines in-school and co-curricular opportunities through a one semester course where the yearbook staff, under the direction of student editors, not only produces a final product but manages the entire business

endeavor. Students are also encouraged to join and become an editor for the school's newspaper, the AHS Weekly and the school's literary magazine, the Tapestry.

Among the interdisciplinary opportunities at Amesbury High School is the unique Early College Program (EC) for sophomores, juniors, and seniors. The ELA and American history curricula combine high school and college level courses to challenge students' high order thinking, inquiry, and problem solving skills. EC students can earn a total of twenty-one college credits by the end of the first semester of their senior year. This program targets students with "untapped potential" with the objective of instilling in the students the belief that they can succeed at the college level. In the sophomore and junior years, the Early College Program aligns American Literature, taught by an AHS teacher, with American History, taught by a Northern Essex Community College (NECC) professor, and is a completely integrated, team-taught class that is one year in length. In the sophomore year, a College Success Seminar class is integrated with the aforementioned classes to assist students with organization, note taking skills, reading strategies, and study skills. The junior year adds music appreciation, art, and/or entrepreneurship to the integrated American history and American literature. Seniors in EC take Composition I during the first semester with the hopes that students would continue their college experience on the NECC campus during the second semester.

Amesbury High School requires that departments across the curriculum integrate writing and research into their yearly expectation of student performance. In order to make sure students adhere to guidelines regarding responsible use of the Internet and other forms of technology, the school librarian facilitates a lesson on ethical use of technology for grades 9-12. Students and parents sign an acceptable use policy at the start of the school year.

There is a clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum. Amesbury High School teachers have nearly completed updating the written curriculum. According to a recent survey (October 2012), seventy-six percent of teachers always use the written curriculum in planning their lessons. This number is up from forty-nine percent last year. This is due directly to those teachers participating in the creation of new curriculum. On the October survey, teachers commented that they would like more time to discuss, review, and adapt to the updated curriculum.

Prior to 2007, there was a consistent schedule for review, revision, and rewriting of curriculum. However, since 2007, there has been a lack of direction and coordination at the district level in continuing this process. For the past six school years, the title and responsibilities of a “department head” have changed dramatically which have been reflected in variations of curriculum revision. Teachers who taught the same courses would meet to revise and update the curriculum in an informal manner. In the spring of 2012, teachers of all subjects in the school took advantage of both professional leave time and paid non-school time to revise the curriculum. Horizontal integration of the curriculum into lesson planning is now overseen by Teacher Leaders. The Teacher Leaders also participate in vertical integration through involvement with Subject Area Committees (SAC).

Based on local supervision and evaluation guidelines followed by building administration, formal observations do not necessarily occur every year for every teacher. Informal observations are becoming more frequent as a result of recent district initiatives. Translation of the written to the taught curriculum is verified through classroom observations and visits by administrators.

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. Since 2007, there has been no formal curricular coordination or vertical articulation among all academic areas within the school as well as the sending school districts. However, informal curricular coordination has been ongoing. As of September 2012, a Director of Accountability and Assessment has been hired and has begun a district-wide needs assessment. In addition, subject area teacher leaders meet with their counterparts monthly with the explicit goal of vertically aligning curriculum. Teacher leaders at the high school level meet with high school administration monthly to address curricular issues as well as other building-based topics. Since the spring of 2012, the majority of curricula have been uploaded into Aspen utilizing an updated format.

The school offers and supports a variety of professional development opportunities. Teachers are committed to teaching, adjusting, coordinating, reviewing, and mapping all curricula. Departments have utilized their department meetings and after school time to revise curriculum. Opportunities for teachers to use summer time to revise and input curriculum have been offered and the teachers were compensated for their time. Curriculum has been formally integrated in the English and history departments through the creation of American Studies I and II. Amesbury High School's English department and Northern Essex Community College have combined curricula to create the Early College Program.

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. The school building committee plan, completed in 2007, increased the number of computer labs available and placed



desktops and three laptop carts in the library. However, this does not meet the current needs of our school. Two of the three labs are used three blocks a day for computer courses. Availability for other classes changes from quarter to quarter depending on scheduling. There is no specifically dedicated language lab or music lab, so all classes share the same limited lab space. If the average classroom were to be fully equipped with computers, there would be four student computers and one teacher computer in each room. However, regular education classrooms typically have one student computer and one teacher computer. Wireless networking is not available except in the library, main office, and central office areas. Due to the lack of a sufficiently powerful network, permission for access to that network is limited. There is insufficient funding for equipment, software, training, and infrastructure.

Many teachers have taken the initiative to apply for supplemental monies to increase student and teacher access to technology. Amesbury Educational Foundation, Inc. (AEFI) has funded several grants to support additional technology and classroom instruction. Two electronic response systems were obtained by the math department through a grant; no other department has any such technology. The use of the LCD projectors with DVD players, document cameras, electronic books, and graphing calculators is prevalent throughout classrooms of all disciplines.

Budget cuts relating to staffing have limited the available classes and increased class size. Despite the fact that enrollment has increased this past school year, positions of retired teachers have not been replaced. This decrease in staff has contributed to an increase in class sizes and a reduction of course offerings. Due to schedule restraints resulting from lack of staff to teach courses, more students are participating in the Big Brother/Big Sister program to fulfill their community service requirements. For the past two school years, the band director, a middle

school teacher, conducts band during A block at the high school and then returns to teach at the middle school for the remainder of the day. The variety of course offerings in the content areas of art, foreign language, family and consumer science, music, and industrial technology are limited and often combine two courses within a classroom in an attempt to meet student graduation requirements.

Students have also had to incur additional financial responsibilities for co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. User fees (\$250 per sport) and co-curricular activity fees (\$60 per year), with a family maximum of \$810, have been part of the student and family financial responsibility for several years. In addition, groups, both athletic and clubs, have had to look for additional opportunities to fundraise for essential group activities. A district-wide transportation fee of \$300 per student and \$450 per family maximum has been in place for several years as well.

Budgetary constraints have resulted in the need for difficult decisions to be made between staffing and acquiring essential supplies for all content areas. Administration has consistently chosen to keep staff in lieu of replacing or adding equipment and supplies. Therefore, a real needs exist in all departments for supplies, technology, and equipment to enhance the delivery of curriculum.

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. Professional Development opportunities are available to the staff. The staff may take individual opportunities, courses, workshops, and visitations for professional development outside of the district curriculum work. At this time, teacher leaders must approve of each appropriate request to ensure that these

requests meet district and building goals. Reimbursement is available for graduate courses and pre-approved related professional development.

The district is currently making progress toward the implementation of the Common Core Standards. Departments are rewriting, revising, and discussing ways to create challenging and inclusive educational plans for curricular alignment with the Common Core Standards.

Throughout the spring and summer of 2012, time and financial compensation were provided for teachers to revise, rewrite, and input curriculum into Aspen. Because this is a living document, teachers are making revisions and enhancing the curriculum documents as they work with students and the curriculum.

Opportunities for collaboration and discussion are provided during A-block through the use of Critical Friends Groups, PLC's, and informal, collegial conversations. Additionally, there are three full Professional Development Days and five Professional Release Times often paired with faculty meetings. Additional opportunities for interdisciplinary, vertical, and horizontal collaboration are needed. To address these concerns, a district-wide Professional Development Council was created. Through the use of surveys, discussions, and collaborations involving all levels and disciplines, the committee was able to identify important gaps in professional development that needed to be addressed. These included training in technology, including the enhancements of Aspen, vertical articulation, behavioral health concerns, as well as data analysis. Amesbury High School's focus has been preparation for the upcoming NEASC accreditation process which has limited its ability to address those identified needs.

## **STANDARD ON CURRICULUM EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Amesbury High School has a curriculum that is increasingly guided by a purposeful design to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations. AHS's Core Values and Beliefs on Learning tie into these 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations by linking curricula directly to the Massachusetts State Frameworks and Common Core Standards. Though the written curriculum had not been consistently updated in the past six years, the majority of AHS written curriculum was documented, assessed, and updated in Aspen in the spring and summer of 2012. This change allowed for a more thorough examination of curriculum by all departments, including the newly introduced teacher leaders and a more direct connection to the Common Core Standards.

It is the responsibility of teacher leaders to oversee and develop curriculum integration and implementation. Procedures for ensuring clear alignment between written and taught curricula are beginning to take shape. The increased use of school-wide rubrics has helped to align the written and taught curricula effectively across departments.

Despite improvement in vertical and horizontal articulation of curriculum, more time needs to be allocated to create opportunities for closer and more in-depth collaboration across and within departments. While this is true, there is ample evidence of effective integration of curriculum among many departments, with local community colleges and organizations, and with Common Core expectations. These opportunities create valuable and authentic learning opportunities for our students.

The curriculum emphasizes and encourages students to achieve a deeper understanding and mastery of course material over a broad exposure to information. This is true in varying degrees, depending upon department and course level. The curriculum requires students to achieve high standards in writing. The curriculum also affords students access to problem solving, higher order thinking, and ethical use of technology.

Budgetary support for curricular needs varies based upon town budget allocations. The adequacy of technology to support the delivery of the curriculum, to address the current and predicted increased student enrollment, and to support the increased curricular emphasis on problem solving across the curriculum are issues that need to be addressed.

Significant progress has been made in the support provided for the evaluation and refining of curriculum. The addition of teacher leader positions and the use of the Backwards Design model for curricular organization have streamlined an important process that needs to maintain momentum. The undefined role of department leaders has presented a challenge in creating an effective structure for curricular communication. To provide more curricular guidance and support to teachers, department management positions must be clarified, defined, and established. Progress has been made to increase time available for collegial discussions focused on pedagogical cross-disciplinary learning. More time needs to become available for actual discussions about written curriculum and planning.

Based on the CPSS Rating Guide for the Standard on Curriculum, Amesbury High School judges its adherence to the Standard as ACCEPTABLE.

Curriculum Committee Members

Cheryl Basque, Foreign Language Teacher, Co-Chair \_\_\_\_\_

April Rivers, English Teacher, Co-Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Gregg Brown, Special Education Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Mary Beth Exner, Guidance Counselor \_\_\_\_\_

Ann Fuller, Social Studies Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Barbara Leary, Mathematics Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Cindy Richmond, Science Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## **Statement of Strengths and Needs for Curriculum Standard**

### *Strengths*

- The curriculum offers students a variety of courses that provide rigor and authentic learning opportunities.
- Curriculum is organized and accessible to all teachers in Aspen.
- Technology is used to enhance curriculum.
- School-wide rubrics are incorporated into the curriculum.

### *Needs*

- Clarify, define, and establish departmental management positions.
- Increase training, Wi-Fi access, and lab space to meet current and future curricular needs.
- Increase both formal and informal time to develop, revise, and assess curriculum to address both vertical and horizontal articulation needs.

## **STANDARD ON INSTRUCTION**

### **Narrative Essay**

Teachers at Amesbury High School continuously examine instructional practices to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and twenty-first century learning expectations. During the 2011-2012 school year, faculty rewrote and adopted Core Values, Beliefs on Learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations with input from staff, students, and the community. Opportunities to examine instructional practices regularly include Critical Friends Groups (CFGs), the John Collins writing program, technology training, Teaching and Learning Alliance professional development, teacher and student surveys, tutoring sessions, department meetings, anti-bullying programs, MCAS data analysis, graduate coursework, learning communities, out-of-district conferences, and regularly scheduled professional workshops.

There are multiple ways that teachers examine their practices. The Critical Friends Groups are each composed of a small, mixed group of faculty members who meet every first and third Tuesday during A-block, a half-hour period before the first class. Teachers discuss student work and issues in their current practice and reflect on topics about teaching and assessment. The additional Tuesdays are reserved for department meetings and for reporting with other groups and the principal. The Critical Friends Groups have been in existence for approximately ten years, excluding a hiatus during building construction. Additionally, during A-block and after school, faculty members are available for individual help. These sessions allow students the option to acquire any extra help they might need, which is in alignment with the school's beliefs on learning. Other uses of A-block time include parent meetings and team meetings to review



504 and/or IEP plans. These meetings are further opportunities for faculty members to work together to examine and adjust instructional practices to reach the needs of diverse learners.

Communication is an important twenty-first century learning expectation, and the John Collins writing program fosters written communication in all departments. AHS teachers maintain folders with samples of student work reviewed periodically by the principal or deans. John Collins himself has also attended several meetings with staff and administration to offer input and constructive criticism. Throughout their four years of high school, students practice five types of writing with clear expectations and deadlines and maintain portfolios. The Collins program is an opportunity for teachers to collaborate across the curriculum and to share a common language around writing. The Teaching and Learning Alliance (TLA) is another professional development program implemented at Amesbury High School. TLA is designed to help teachers improve instructional practices. For the past five years, teachers have learned to practice the gradual release of responsibility method by modeling, providing guided practice, and establishing independent learning in the classroom. Multi-department groups of teachers each year open up lab classrooms to colleagues for informal observation of instructional practices, such as gradual release.

Other ways teachers examine and adjust their instructional practices are through trainings and workshops. Anti-bullying education began officially in 2010 and informally through workshops provided to the student body in years prior. Staff and students meet annually and as needed to discuss bullying and its impact on teens. During faculty meetings and professional days each year, teachers examine MCAS scores and test questions. Teachers look for patterns in students' strengths and weaknesses. Teachers not only analyze statistical data on MCAS scores, but also on the district's annual writing assessment administered by the Writing Assessment

Team. Faculty analyzes the types of questions and writing prompts that challenge students and adjust lessons accordingly in respective classes.

Amesbury High School has five Professional Release Time Days as well as one full Professional Development Day during the school year allocated for professional training. Teachers also have two full days of professional development before the start of the school year. Educators attend workshops showcasing latest educational practices. New teachers and staff also have training sessions the week before school starts and monthly throughout the year. They are assigned a mentor for guidance with whom they meet formally and informally as needed. Professional workshops help Amesbury High School teachers to develop uniform instructional practices that adhere to their Core Values, Beliefs on Learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations.

In order to meet Amesbury High School's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations, teachers are increasingly personalizing instruction. In a majority of classroom environments, instruction progresses from teacher-directed delivery to student-directed and independent learning. This gradual-release method, adopted through TLA training, is practiced cyclically throughout units of study across departments. Based on the Endicott survey and the independent staff survey, more than three-fourths of instructional staff personalizes lessons on a daily basis. About half of teachers spend an average of three to five hours per week providing assistance to individuals or small groups before and after school; the other half of instructional staff exceeds six hours of extra help per week.

Parents surveyed agree that personal learning opportunities enable teachers to address the individual learning needs of their children. In the self-study of 2011-2012, 97% of teachers reported a proficient or exemplary rating in their ability to address individual learning needs.

Teachers are using differentiated instruction to address diverse learning styles: auditory, visual, and tactile. Examples of differentiated instruction include heterogeneous groupings, hands-on activities, one-on-one assistance, discussion seminars, and technology-based activities. Teachers surveyed report that they communicate with families through e-mail, webpages, phone calls, and conferences on a consistent basis. Teachers rate their rapport with students and families as consistent, friendly, and respectful. While there has been no past formal advisory program for students at Amesbury High School, many teachers alternatively enhance their positive relationships with students in the context of sports, clubs, internships, and co-curricular events. In February of 2013, the advisory program was launched pairing students and faculty for the purpose of providing additional academic, social, and emotional guidance. The program will meet twice a month for 32 minutes, and adults will be provided with a scripted curriculum.

Like personalization, cross-disciplinary learning at Amesbury High School is present and growing. Although not all students take courses intentionally built on cross-curricular studies at this time, the high school is moving in that direction. Honors American Studies I and II are co-taught by English and history teachers. The Early College program for sophomores and juniors is co-taught by college professors and a high school teacher. Early College seniors are taught by a NECC professor. American Studies I and II as well as Early College readings, writing assignments, and projects are thematic and interdisciplinary. Special and regular educators teach English classes combining students in grades nine and ten as well as eleven and twelve. There have been increasing opportunities for teachers to share cross-disciplinary instructional practices with each other at bi-monthly CFG meetings and at many professional development workshops.

In addition to offering formal courses based on combined studies, students are engaged in cross-disciplinary learning through informal thematic studies that transcend individual content

areas. To enable students to make meaningful connections between one content area and another, teachers surveyed report numerous, specific examples of cross-disciplinary units of study. For instance, students in American Studies I learn WWI poetry through a historical lens and *Huckleberry Finn* through analysis of Civil War racism. In American Studies II, students engage in a Dear Mr. Woodwell letter-writing project based on WWII and a Great Depression postcard project. Students studying French and Spanish make local and global connections using topics of food, shopping, poetry, art, and film. In the sciences, students study innovations and inventions and their impact on society. Thematic studies on *The Odyssey*, biographies, short stories, and poetry require English students to integrate art, music, technology, and drama. In law and psychology courses, students write journals and discuss essential questions about society and living choices. Students create cyber-bullying videos and web pages for simulated clients in technology classes. Social studies and foreign language students study historical events and universal themes linking history and language to literature, science, politics, and the arts.

AHS teachers utilize instructional strategies that foster active and self-directed learning in support of achieving the school's twenty-first century learning expectations. Disciplines such as physical education, music, art, technology, foreign language, and science are inherently participatory. District-wide professional training in gradual release methodology has allowed teachers in all disciplines to focus on improving active engagement. The Endicott survey reveals that 88% of students view that their teachers use group activities, which indicates many opportunities for student-directed learning. Many content-area teachers surveyed encourage Socratic-seminar discussions, peer editing, peer teaching, oral presentations, and hands-on projects. In the self-study survey, teachers report that they prepare project-based and discovery lessons for 50-90% of each class block, depending on the lesson. Approximately four times per

year, teachers and administrators participate in Learning Walks, during which they observe several classrooms in all disciplines. Learning Walk notes reveal that students are often interacting with each other in small clusters or in stations around a classroom while the teacher facilitates learning.

The majority of teachers are emphasizing inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking into their lessons. Based on the Endicott survey, these learning strategies can be seen across departments as 85% of the teaching staff is using these instructional practices. Based on the self-study, nearly 94% of teachers rate themselves as proficient or higher in integrating inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking in their lessons. The Endicott survey shows that a majority of parents believe their son's/daughter's teachers are emphasizing inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking. Across all disciplines, teachers are moving from traditional textbook methods of teaching to a more teacher as facilitator model with authentic assessment opportunities.

Instructional practices which enable students to apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks are emerging but need further development. In the Endicott survey, a majority of students believe that they have the opportunity to apply what they are learning outside the classroom. Teachers surveyed report assigning a variety of authentic tasks. In art courses, students mount, frame, and exhibit visual art pieces in the community. In social studies and English classes, students engage in authentic writing, portfolio work, research, and presentations that prepare students for college and careers. In addition, one math teacher received a \$10,000 grant for a partnership with Lowell's Boat Shop, a local historic landmark where students will learn the historical implications as well as applying the math used at the shop and on the river. Experiments on the Merrimack River involve velocity of currents, water depth, boat capacity,

tidal variation, and rowing speed and the application of geometry, trigonometry, and algebraic functions. Science students engage in authentic laboratory investigations, field studies, and oral presentations. Foreign language students write skits that recreate restaurant experience and create music videos for Spanish songs. Social studies students utilize a wide variety of primary sources ranging from the historical to current day in multi-media formats, analyze political cartoons, and discuss law and psychology through case studies. The senior research presentation is an authentic task aimed at preparing students for public speaking in college and the workplace. Cross-disciplinary collaborative learning and technology use are skills students will be able to apply to real-world settings upon graduation. A graduation requirement at Amesbury High School is seventy-five hours of community service, a rewarding program that encourages students to coach, assist, serve, and teach others in Amesbury and surrounding towns.

The majority of teachers at Amesbury High School integrate technology into their lessons. Based on the Endicott survey, more than three-fourths of the student body stated that their teachers ask them to use technology in their assignments. Increasingly, teachers are using technology in an attempt to meet the needs of the diverse learning styles, create higher-order thinking, and prepare students for the real world. Amesbury High School offers a wide variety of technological tools. As observed in Learning Walks, some teachers use the same technology but use it in different ways. The self-study reveals that teachers are using projectors, computer programs, document cameras, Smartboards, cameras, lab equipment, film/audio, web pages, video production, among others. The mathematics department recently received a grant to purchase document cameras, Mobi-views, and clickers. Although every teacher does not have access to each of these technological tools, students are utilizing many of them throughout their years at Amesbury High School. While access to computer labs is challenging, through grants, a

limited amount of technology has been procured and is integrated into instruction. A majority of the teaching staff has expressed the desire to incorporate technology through personal devices into their instruction; however, the current infrastructure would not support such a pedagogical shift.

An increased amount of teachers are integrating self-assessment and reflection into their lessons. Over 80% of students state that teachers provide them with opportunities to assess their own work, according to the Endicott survey. In many classes, students are given self-assessments in a variety of forms. Some use self-assessments after a project, unit, or quarter/semester, while many students self-assess daily in the form of writing and discussions. Many departments use peer editing and a 3-2-1 strategy, whereby students critique each others' work and provide positive remarks and thoughts for improvement. Some departments allow time for students to check and grade their own homework. Some teachers give students a teacher evaluation to have the student reflect on the class and make suggestions on how the teacher can adapt to improve the class for future students. As seen in the self-study, 94% of teachers respect their students and accept student feedback so that they can make adjustments to their instruction.

Teachers at Amesbury High School adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student. Teachers regularly use formative assessment during instructional time. Examples of formative assessments include John Collins Types One and Two writing (brainstorms and recall quizzes), exit slips, group work, practice during class time, and verbal responses from students. These allow teachers to adjust their instruction either during that class period or the next day. Many teachers encourage students to re-take or re-write assignments so those students can achieve mastery. Also, a majority of teachers commonly assess student understanding during class time and adjust their instruction accordingly. In connection with this practice, students receive timely

feedback on their work. In the self-study, most of teachers report they grade and return student work within a few days. This practice allows teachers to remain fully aware of their students' level of understanding. Also, since grades are available in real time in Aspen, parents can stay up-to-date regarding their children's academic progress.

Most teachers differentiate their instruction based on formative assessments and other student information. Instructors are receptive to student feedback during lessons. In the self-study, 97% of teachers claim to adjust instruction based on student input. However, 88% of teachers report that they sometimes or rarely receive information from parents that cause them to make adjustments to instruction. Regardless, teachers report in the self-study that they will contact a parent when need arises. As a result, 81% percent of teachers believe they are proficient in meeting students' individual learning needs. In regards to students with IEPs and 504's, regular education teachers are in close contact with special education liaisons and the 504 Coordinator and are required to attend IEP and 504 meetings. This communication and electronic availability of both types of documents result in teachers' having close knowledge of each student's needs and gives them the ability to differentiate instruction accordingly.

Most teachers purposefully organize group learning activities. According to the student survey, 88% of respondents claim teachers use group activities in class. These include Socratic seminars, labs, peer-editing, jigsaws, think-pair-shares, and pair/group projects. Collaborative learning enables students to benefit from others' knowledge and strengths. When asked in the self-study, more than half of teachers report that they strategically group students to maximize learning. Many teachers work creatively with the classroom layouts to facilitate various types of group work. For example, a few teachers in the English and foreign language departments have special desks that can fit into multiple shapes.



Teachers provide additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom. To meet the needs of diverse learners—including a large number of students requiring special education services—teachers differentiate instruction and assessments for individual students. For example, teachers create modified tests and quizzes with word banks to prompt memory and alternate questions as needed. Many students require breaks and extra time on tasks. For special and regular education students alike, teachers may read aloud and clarify test questions, break down long-term assignments, eliminate distractions in the classroom, provide preferential seating, check for understanding, cue when changing topics, offer graphic organizers, and think out loud while instructing. Many teachers assist students in organization by posting agendas and homework and encouraging the use of binders and folders. Further alternative teaching strategies include pre-teaching content, pairing visual instruction with auditory, using technology, and establishing small groups with a balance of struggling and competent workers. Teachers communicate regularly with special education liaisons and parents. Importantly, teachers employ a variety of instructional practices to accommodate diverse learning styles and to reduce the tracking and leveling of students. Finally, teachers utilize the morning A-block and after school hours to provide any student with extra help and to assist with make-up work. Teachers surveyed report working with students one-on-one for an average of three-to-five hours outside of regular school hours weekly.

Teachers, individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices. Ninety-four percent of teachers say that they individually adjust their instructional practices based upon data collected from formative and summative assessments. Specific examples include daily quizzes, 3-2-1's, John Collins Type One writing, entries in journals, and questioning students directly. All teachers give summative assessments either at the end of chapters or units, quarters,

and/or semesters. Some faculty meeting time is spent reviewing data collected in summative assessments such as the freshman WAT composition, sophomore ELA and math MCAS, and the freshman biology MCAS. English, math, and science departments also review this data during department meetings. AP subject area teachers analyze data collected from the AP exams. While teachers have been using some form of individual or departmental rubric when assessing student work, teachers are now implementing the newly-created school-wide rubrics. Item analysis reports are generated after objective tests to identify areas of improvement.

Two areas that need improvement involve meeting across content areas to examine student work and soliciting more feedback from students and parents around instructional practices. While teachers meet within content areas, few teachers are able to meet across content areas to examine student work. Because of the confines of the schedule, most teachers are unable to meet across content areas during their preparatory block. Teachers look at student work individually and within their departments, but 77% of the faculty say that there is not enough common planning time. Teachers in the TLA lab classrooms examine student work and teaching strategies after inter-visitations. Almost half of all students, report that their teachers ask for their feedback to improve teaching strategies. When surveyed, 94% of teachers indicated that they make adjustments to their teaching strategies based upon student feedback. Few parents report being asked for feedback from their child's teachers, and 86% of teachers indicated that they only rarely/sometimes receive feedback from parents regarding ways to adjust their instructional practices.

Resources are available for teachers to examine current research in order to improve instructional practices. The school library houses books and magazines on current educational and news topics and on research in education. In faculty meetings or CFG's, teachers read and

discuss articles on current educational topics such as homework or instructional practices that work. Discourse during TLA professional workshops occurs when departments meet to discuss teaching methodologies. For example, the science department discussed the need for writing in science classes and adopted science notebooks as a way to meet this need. There are TLA lab teachers that open their classrooms to other teachers for observation and discussion of best practices. Teachers and administrators participate in Learning Walks and then share observations at faculty meetings. New teachers are given a mentor teacher to aid them in acclimating to classroom and school-wide policies. The faculty meets annually to review the MCAS scores and data in order identify weaknesses and suggest how to improve. The administration communicates the expectation that improving instruction is important and encourages teachers to set applicable goals at the beginning of the year.

Teachers at AHS engage in professional discourse focused on instructional practice.

Teachers receive feedback from parents via the School Council, direct emails, telephone calls, and meetings when requested. Ninety-four percent of teachers receive feedback from students that cause them to make adjustments to their instruction. Some teachers pass out course evaluations for students to complete at the middle and/or end of a course. These evaluations result in adjustments to instruction. As a result of discussions through TLA and some student feedback, a World History teacher and the forensics teacher redesigned their curriculum in order to utilize authentic application of knowledge and assessment. Because leadership positions at the department level are currently undefined, meetings regarding instructional improvement have been unstructured. Instruction is most often discussed informally.

Teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. The Massachusetts Department of

Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) profile lists that 91% of Amesbury High School's core academic classes are taught by teachers who are highly qualified. Between August 2009 and February 2012, the faculty has earned roughly 12,700 PDP hours through district-sponsored professional development courses. Committees and professional learning communities have developed around school improvement planning, peer observation, curriculum mapping, teacher book groups, arts integration, and other topics. Professional development also includes conferences, workshops, and graduate courses.

Teachers also administer websites on School World and Aspen that include calendars, student work examples, materials, homework, course information, assignment submission, student records, online course curriculum, blogs, and attendance. Staff regularly attends meetings that consist of department, faculty, and Critical Friends Groups. However, 75% of the staff feels that they do not have enough time to discuss best practices. In the Endicott survey, 88% of students agree that teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. On maintaining expertise in their content area, 96% of the teachers agree. Administration provides current articles from educational periodicals, and the school also maintains a professional library for teacher use. The information technology and library staff also share their expertise on databases, media, Aspen, and other programs.

Amesbury High School teachers provide high-quality instruction, analyze student performance, adjust instruction, and provide consistent and reliable feedback to students. Teachers emphasize effort and quality of work and aim to engage all students and meet their needs. Students are challenged to take risks and follow the core values of integrity, respect for individuality, responsibility, academic excellence, and problem solving.

## **STANDARD ON INSTRUCTION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Amesbury High School has recently developed and implemented new Core Values and Beliefs on Learning as a guide for instruction and assessment. For the 2012-2013 school year, teachers have a clear definition of the school's Core Values, Beliefs on Learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations as a foundation for their lessons. In varying degrees, teachers use peer observation, reflection, and collaboration to examine their practices against the core values of integrity, respect for individuality, responsibility, academic excellence, and problem solving.

On the whole, teachers personalize instruction, engage students in active cross-disciplinary learning, emphasize inquiry and problem solving, apply knowledge to authentic tasks, use technology, and encourage self-assessment and reflection. Overall, student-centered learning is the norm. Some ways that teachers achieve a balance between teacher-and-student-centered instruction include facilitating small groups of students, adjusting instruction to meet the needs of various learning styles, and developing positive relationships with students and families. One of the benefits to having a relatively small school and committed faculty is a resulting close-knit community where teachers take the time to get to know each student.

Although currently not every student has access to take a co-taught course, cross-disciplinary learning is prevalent through thematic studies that transcend individual content areas. On the whole, students are active engaged in the classroom. Students are encouraged to take charge of their own research, projects, and cooperative learning activities in most content areas. While students are interacting in small groups or whole-class activities, they are instructed on how to use inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking. Active learning is also

evident in teachers' integration of technology in lessons which often end in self-assessment and reflection. The adoption of school-wide rubrics and the use of portfolios in many classrooms provide structure for students to reflect on their work. To prepare students for twenty-first century careers, educators utilize authentic tasks that promote community involvement.

Teachers at Amesbury High School adjust their instructional practices based on different types of feedback. Teachers use formative and summative assessments to inform instruction and to organize purposeful group learning. In addition to modifying instruction for students with Individualized Education Plans, teachers use a wide variety of techniques to meet the needs of all types of learners. In order to engage students during a long block of class time, teachers regularly employ a variety of instructional methods. To meet the needs of students, teachers often spend one-on-one time with students before and after school.

Class sizes have grown due to an increase in student enrollment and a decrease in staff. This situation has impacted the schedule and course offerings. Teachers have risen to this challenge by working diligently to provide quality instruction to meet the needs of students. At times, this challenge has inhibited the ability of teachers to work collaboratively across the curriculum.

The most common methods for teachers to improve their practices include professional development, outside courses, in-service courses, conferences, workshops, administrative evaluation process, and department meetings. Teachers maintain expertise in their content areas. Amesbury High School teachers expect quality effort and work, engage students, meet diverse needs, and provide safe and collaborative learning environments.

Based on the CPSS Rating Guide for the Standard on Instruction, Amesbury High School judges its adherence to this standard as **ACCEPTABLE**.

Curriculum Committee Members

Jennifer Daileanes, English Teacher, Co-Chair

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Matthew Moore, Math Teacher, Co-chair

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Tricia Cignetti, Science Teacher

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Stan Froncki, Technology Teacher

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Emily Malbon, English Teacher

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Susan Mroz, Math Teacher

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Laurie Pancoast, Science Teacher

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## Statement of Strengths and Needs for Instruction Standard

### *Strengths*

- Engagement of district professional development activities such as professional learning communities, curriculum mapping, school improvement planning, learning walks, conferences, and graduate courses
- The use of active and collaborative learning activities and opportunities for students to use technology, collaboration, and reflection
- The personalization and differentiation of instruction for all students, which addresses a wide variety of learning needs and styles with wide availability of additional academic support both in and outside of class
- The application of teaching strategies learned in professional development, particularly TLA's gradual release of learning responsibility from teacher to student, which fosters self-directed learning
- Integration of technology to enhance inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking, specifically through the media center in the library
- Implementation of John Collins writing program for students and teachers across disciplines
- The adjustments of course instruction by teachers based on feedback, teacher reflection, and the use of data from different formative assessments.
- Access to up-to-date professional literature in school library



*Needs:*

- Reduce class sizes in order to improve all facets of instruction and learning
- Provide more time to discuss best practices with colleagues within and without content areas
- Expand opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning, particularly co-taught courses
- Update and train staff on existing and new technology on an ongoing basis
- Purchase and incorporate technology for students to improve communication, research, writing, and problem solving

**STANDARD ON ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT LEARNING**  
**Narrative Essay**

Amesbury High School is in the developmental stage of employing a formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess whole school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations. As a faculty, Amesbury High School's 'Smart Goal' for the Department of Education is to have each teacher apply at least one of the school-wide rubrics for at least three different assessments within their classrooms in the school year 2012-2013. School-wide rubrics have been developed and distributed to the faculty for utilization. Currently, teachers are implementing these rubrics into their course of study. Once departments have selected their primary and secondary expectations, AHS will pilot a reporting practice based on the school-wide rubrics. This proposed program and specific results will be shared and evaluated by all departments. As the AHS staff evaluates the program, the high school will be able to move forward and begin reporting out to families for the 2013-2014 school year.

The technical staff at Amesbury High School is currently in the process of developing the link needed to report each student's progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations to the school community. Presently, all assessments are reported out through the family portal, Aspen. Progress reports and quarter grades are also reported out on Aspen. Ratings are currently based on their numeric value. The principal sends out a monthly letter that states to the community the school's achievements in implementing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations.

Professional staff at Amesbury High School utilize different strategies to collect, disaggregate, and analyze data to respond to inequities in student achievements. Faculty uses frequent formative and summative assessments, as well as comparing individual student grades to overall class grades on the Aspen portal. Faculty also collaboratively and individually

analyzes MCAS scores to determine where student weaknesses appear. Currently, Amesbury High School does not have a complete list of the identified targets for improved performance based on the analysis of equity gaps in state assessments results and other internal school/district assessments results (e.g. special education students, gender, ELL students, minority students). However, based on academic standing exiting middle school, which is based on teacher reports, MCAS scores, and special education assessments, a number of incoming freshman are assigned to a co-taught cohort academic subject (content specialist with special education teacher). The math, English, and social studies departments each have one co-taught cohort section in order to meet those students at their entry point, while continuing to maintain a heterogeneous environment. At the close of the school year, teachers determine whether students need another year of co-taught cohort classes. Amesbury High School also utilizes the School Improvement Plan, which focuses on instruction that impacts learning for all students.

In addition to MCAS scores, grades in the Aspen portal, and formative and summative assessments, evidence of disaggregated data that has been used to examine inequities in student achievement include journals, white board reviews, item analyses, essays, homework, and class projects. In order to address inequities in student achievement, faculty at Amesbury High School uses modeling and gradual release strategies, allows students to review and revise work, and encourages students to engage in active reading. To respond to partitions and ability levels, teachers employ differentiated instruction. Additionally, faculty participates in goal setting with students, and is available before and after school for extra help for students who need it. Having class discussions about task difficulty and expectations allows faculty to adjust lessons based on student feedback and re-teach information to improve student comfort level with content.

Prior to each unit of study, teachers communicate the school's applicable 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations and related unit-specific goals to be assessed. These expectations are seen posted on the wall in classrooms. The use of essential questions and individual goals for each unit/lesson are frequently discussed and also can be found written on the whiteboard and on handouts. These expectations are discussed; specifically before lessons, the purpose, relevance, and goals of the activity are reviewed. In addition, these expectations, essential questions, and unit-specific goals are found on the curriculum maps in the Aspen portal.

Prior to summative assessments, teachers may provide students with the corresponding rubrics. As a standing practice, teachers use rubrics and provide students with the rubrics for the assignment in order to discuss and understand the grading criteria, expectations, and goals of the assignment. In addition, rubrics are often used in peer and self-reflections. The implementation of the school-wide rubrics is an ongoing endeavor. While the teachers try to tailor the rubric to the specific assignment, the core expectation remains the same. For example, the communication rubric is being used in the English department for research papers, oral presentations, summer reading, and journal/blog writing. The technology department has crafted its rubrics to include the school-wide communication and technology rubric in several of its media and oral presentations.

Teachers at Amesbury High School regularly employ a wide range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments. In the area of summative assessment, all disciplines make use of individual assignment grades, formal written quizzes and tests, mid-quarter progress reports, quarterly grades, and/or midterm grades. Individual assignments are a daily occurrence across subject areas. Most disciplines have graded, formal presentations and other written and oral projects. Many disciplines also incorporate essays and

other formal papers. Portfolios are used in subject areas such as English, art, and personal finance. In addition to tests and quizzes, classroom teachers are increasingly incorporating authentic assessments. Teachers also use results from standardized tests such as MCAS tests and AP exams to inform their classroom assessments.

In addition to the summative assessments already mentioned, teachers at Amesbury High School regularly employ a wide range of formative assessments. AHS teachers increased the variety and frequency of formative assessments across subject areas. One major area where all subject areas have seen this growth is in the area of “John Collins Type I writing.” This is informal writing used to assess student learning spontaneously and/or rapidly, as well as to help students learn from their own work. At Amesbury High School, the faculty in all disciplines have been doing writing in their classrooms and using it to assess student progress and learning. In the English department, use of this type of assessment is a nearly daily occurrence. Based on a teacher questionnaire, usage varies from 1-2 times per week to daily in other subject areas. Teachers across subject areas have also increased the use of “John Collins Type II writing” – quick graded/checked assessments to rapidly gauge student progress and learning. These structures have been emphasized and reinforced at department meetings, faculty meetings, and in teacher goal-setting and evaluations over the past several years. Teachers across subject areas use this type of assessment 1-2 times per week, on average.

Another major area that has seen growth across disciplines has been the use of document cameras to allow spontaneous and planned discussion of student work in the classroom by teachers and students. This technology is now present in most classrooms in Amesbury High School. According to a staff survey, most teachers are using this technology from several times per week to daily.

There are many other types of formative assessment used by Amesbury High School staff members. The most common methods utilized by teachers include: warm-up activities (used on a daily basis in all departments); blog responses (used 1-2 times per week by many English and some other teachers); Socratic seminars (used 3-4 times per month by some teachers); group/collaborative presentations (used by most teachers in varying degrees); student use of individual white boards in solving problems and displaying solutions (used by most mathematics, foreign language, and health teachers, and some other teachers); science notebooks; calling on a variety of students (not just relying on volunteers) to make sure all students are engaged; electronic “clickers” to respond to teacher questions (the technology tabulates and analyzes answers); and “active reading” across disciplines through the use of TLA (Teaching & Learning Alliance) protocols.

Staff at Amesbury High School work together systematically as a whole school, by department, and per course to design, implement, evaluate, and update all varieties of assessments – formative, summative, and/or common. Student work, instructional strategies, and assessments are exchanged and reviewed at monthly department meetings. Sessions for Critical Friends Groups (CFG), TLA, and other Professional Learning Communities (PLC) exchange ideas and develop plans that are centered on a common interest, such as grading practice and policy, and occur twice monthly and across academic disciplines. For a few days over each of the past two summers, teachers in the same subject area came together to reexamine and map curriculum for alignment with *Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks* (2011), i.e. Common Core Standards, essential questions for units of study, and assessments. Additionally, individual teachers committed a collective total of 434.25 hours to map their respective subject area curricula in Aspen. Professional Development (PD) days, Professional Release Time (PRT)

days, and staff meetings regularly focus on specific issues by school or department, such as instruction and assessment and analysis of the most recent MCAS results with the purpose of informing future instruction.

Formal meeting time for these various standard collaborations is allotted as follows: departmental meetings are held once per month for one half hour and meet ten times per year equaling 5 hours; Critical Friends Groups meet twice per month for one half hour and meet nine months per year equaling 9 hours; facilitators (CFG) and the principal meet once per month for one half hour and meet nine times per year equaling 4.5 hours; curriculum updates occurred three days in the summer (2011) for a total of 15 hours; full faculty meetings meet five times per year for a total of 5 hours; three professional development days (PD) are each five hours long totaling 15 hours; five professional release training days (PRT) which include faculty meeting time are three hours each totaling 15 hours. In all, there are typically anywhere from 60 to 70 hours of scheduled, formal meeting time per year.

Various outcomes materialized as a result of these exchanges and cooperative efforts. All staff contributed to a school-wide rubric to reflect the high school's core values of learning: Integrity, Respect for Individuality, Responsibility, Academic Excellence, and Problem solving. Teachers modify the school-wide rubrics for application to particular courses of study. English teachers annually update summer reading requirements for all high school students. Each summer, students select from "Faculty Favorites." This is a list of books sponsored by various high school teachers and administrators. Early in the next school year, time is set aside in the school schedule for the entire student body and faculty to participate in a follow up discussion that concludes with an assessment of students. The 2012 Summer Reading Rubric is a direct result of the cooperative efforts of several teachers and formed from the school-wide rubric.

Cumulative (quarterly, by semester, and yearly) assessments are periodically reviewed and revised to align them with the current state standards. For example, quarterly exams for Integrated Math 2A, 2B, and 2C and Bio CP A, B and C currently make use of past MCAS questions that correspond to course content. Additionally, teachers of many courses are revising quarterly exams to ensure that questions correspond to the current standards.

All staff participates in examining results of MCAS exams and, annually, have identified strengths and weaknesses in student understanding of content by analyzing the difference in the percent of correct responses or mean points earned between the school and state, both in the aggregate and by subgroup. Outright percentages, mean points earned, and number of zeroes (relative to open response questions) are also considered. Annually, a cross section of the staff participates in administering and grading a district-based writing assessment given to all freshmen in March of each year. From this analysis, instruction and assessment are changed with the goal of improving student knowledge and skill in identified areas.

Common grading policies have been developed. Foreign language teachers have developed common grading policies for all students for both French and Spanish, the two world languages available at Amesbury High School. Senior English classes utilize a common grading policy to ensure consistency for the assessment of the senior research project. Additionally, high school teachers apply Collins Writing to explore students' ideas and develop and evaluate their writing which uses a common grading procedure.

Teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work. This feedback can take many forms. Most frequently, the teacher evaluation and corrections on student written work is seen in all content areas. For example, in the Senior English classrooms, students engage in peer editing as well as teacher critiques, and specific



feedback is given to students on their rough drafts of college essays and research papers; final drafts are a result of a fruition of the writing process. In several mathematics, health, and foreign language classrooms, teachers employ the use of small, hand-held white boards. Students hold their responses up, compare with other students, and receive immediate feedback on the skill at hand. Document cameras are also used in most classrooms to show student work samples on the projector with teacher and peer feedback given immediately. These are specifically used to engage student learning and improvement. Online forums are also used where teachers have the ability to access student responses and give immediate feedback on drafts and projects in the process stage. For evidence of improved student work, teachers often use pre-tests and post-tests to gauge fractional gains and implement remediation where needed.

Teachers at Amesbury High School are committed to using formative assessments to assess student progress in real-time and over longer periods of time. The teachers use the information gathered to inform and adapt their instruction, both spontaneously and longer-term, in order to improve student learning. Teachers also discuss their techniques and results with others teaching common courses as well as with teachers teaching other courses, so that rapid adjustments can be made to instructional practices and curriculum.

Evidence of this has been documented in many, and increasing instances, such as:

- student use of individual white boards in solving and displaying mathematics problems, and the teacher responding to the success and/or failure by altering instruction in the moment.
- use of warm-up exercises, question and answers, and discussions in multiple subject areas to gauge student retention of previous lessons, assess student progress and learning, and help teachers determine how best to proceed—possibilities including: more practice,

more teacher-led guided problem solving, students teaching peers through board work and/or in small groups.

- use of document cameras in multiple departments to project and discuss student work, again, with teachers maintaining their instructional plans or changing them based on the outcome.
- John Collins Type I writing used throughout the school in all departments – often used to generate and stimulate discussion which allows the teacher to gauge student learning and progress and thus, inform their instructional decisions and paths going forward.
- Notebooks/journals are used throughout the various departments to collect students' thoughts and reflections on content and use them to inform instruction, reteach material, and develop assessments.

This variety of evidence has been gathered and witnessed on learning walks on multiple occasions by a majority of the staff and administrators. Evidence has also been documented during collection and review of John Collins folders reflecting regular use of Type I writing – journal writing, short responses to prompts, etc. and Type 2 writing – short mini-quizzes, etc.

Amesbury High School has undergone changes in the administration and organization of Curriculum and Instruction oversight. School year 2010/2011 was the last year of having a Director of Curriculum who met with principals, who then met with K-12 Directors. School year 2011/2012 was organized again with Director of Curriculum who met with the Dean of Students and Curriculum who then met with NEASC Liaisons. The current school year, and moving forward has brought a new model to the Amesbury School District. There is now a Director of Assessment and Accountability and eight Teacher Leader positions at the high school. The eight areas include Math, Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, Technology, Foreign Language,

Wellness, and Visual & Performing Arts. The leadership structure for the guidance and library departments is organized on a district level where one teacher leader works with members of her department district-wide. The Special Education Department also has a new organizational structure where each building in the district has a Special Education Facilitator who is responsible for IEP oversight and ensuring consistency in the delivery of services.

Each of the four schools in the Amesbury Public School District has these Teacher Leader positions. Each administrator is paired with a Subject Area Committee (SAC). For example, Mrs. McAndrews, the AHS Dean of Students and Curriculum, is the Social Studies leader of the four Social Studies Teacher Leaders. Other administrators are paired to the SAC loosely based on their areas of specific expertise. The new model has two goals: to generate subject area Professional Development suggestions and to revise and/or write curriculum. In order to fulfill these goals, Amesbury High School administrators are meeting with the eight Teacher Leaders once monthly.

Curriculum revision is an ongoing process for Amesbury High School teachers. It is based on analysis of student performance, achievement, and productivity. Beginning in the spring of 2012, all subject areas began the process of revising and mapping curriculum. Several subject areas are complete or are near completion of the process. The new curricula have been added to Aspen. The curricula are available to teachers who are able to edit the document as needed.

At this time, the Assessment Committee is unaware of any data from sending schools. Additionally, data from receiving schools and post-secondary institutions is not available. However, evidence of a wide range of student work exists in all departments that demonstrates the school's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations are being addressed. This evidence includes

changes to curriculum and instruction. In the past year, Amesbury High School staff has spent a great deal of time writing and revising curriculum. In spring of 2012, teachers wrote curriculum for a total of 78 hours. The summer of 2012, twenty-one teachers wrote curriculum for a total of 356.25 hours. In May of 2012, eight teachers participated in a TLA Lab Cohort debrief for a total of 24 hours. For the purpose of revising instruction, teachers have participated in Learning Walks. For example, in May of 2012, seven teachers participated in a Learning Walk, for a total of 49 hours.

The professional staff of Amesbury High School reviews grading and reporting policies at the beginning of every new course. This review is done at the departmental level and administrative level, as all grading policies are collected and reviewed by the administration. To ensure equality of opportunity for all students, uniform course expectations are generated when different teachers are instructing the same course. Teachers have input regarding the use of the Aspen grading system and use preparation time to discuss, revise, and analyze grading practices to insure consistency and alignment with core values and beliefs about learning. Exam item analyses are used to review the validity of all assessment questions, as well.

Amesbury High School faculty and staff regularly work to align school grading and reporting practices with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. Teachers are currently in the process of integrating school-wide rubrics into classroom assignments. Teachers consistently adhere to core values in classroom expectations. Reporting practices such as progress reports and the parent and student portals of the Aspen grading program allow immediate access to current grades. Early College, Advanced Placement, Honors and College Preparatory courses are currently offered, with new courses planned for the upcoming years. An

example of student input in this process is when students in the Early College Program requested a course weighting change which is reflected in the AHS Student Handbook.

The Student Handbook is reviewed and aligned each year by the Student Advisory Council, the Faculty Advisory Council, School Committee and the administration. Instructors revise, assess, and align curriculum on Aspen, frequently and regularly, and content standards and curriculum are posted in Aspen. Students are encouraged to take ownership and responsibility for their life-long learning, as teachers continue to align school rubrics with curriculum content.

## **STANDARD ON ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT LEARNING EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Inherent in the practice of all teachers of Amesbury High School are the core values; this emphasis is evidenced in a variety of ways throughout the assessment of student learning. The continued implementation of the varied, authentic assessments across all curricula is a strength at Amesbury High School. The high frequency with which teachers employ both formative and summative assessments to aid in understanding student learning, inform and adapt instruction, and to identify and address inequities in student achievement is also commendable. Improvement of student work can be directly related to the emphasis on immediate and corrective feedback provided to students. The collegiality of the staff at Amesbury High School is indicative of its core values as well. The staff collaborates to create, analyze, and revise assessments (formative, summative, and common) to ensure student achievement to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations and to ensure the curriculum and instruction is aligned as well. Clearly, Amesbury High School demonstrates a commitment to adhering to the high standards it has established.

Although the assessment committee has found evidence of multiple rubrics being utilized across all curricula areas, the implementation of the school-wide rubrics is an ongoing endeavor. Teachers' continued use and adaptation of these rubrics is needed. Furthermore, prior to each unit of study, teachers routinely provide related unit-specific learning goals and provide corresponding rubrics. However, due to its infancy stage of development, the formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess and report whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations, is a definitive area of needing improvement. Once the proposed program is initially implemented, targeted areas of improvement will result. Additionally, Amesbury High School needs to improve on collecting

and aggregating data specifically for improving performance based on the analysis of equity gaps in state and local assessment results. Data from sending schools, receiving schools, and post-secondary institutions also need to be addressed.

Based on the CPSS Rating Guide for the Standard on Assessment of and for Student Learning, Amesbury High School judges its adherence to the standard as LIMITED.

Assessment of and for Student Learning Committee Members

- Thad Ackerman, Math Teacher, Co-Chair \_\_\_\_\_
- Jean Brockmyre, English Teacher, Co-Chair \_\_\_\_\_
- Michelle Ruggiero, Special Education Teacher \_\_\_\_\_
- Brett Manoloff, Science Teacher \_\_\_\_\_
- Ann Marie Flynn, Social Studies Teacher \_\_\_\_\_
- Amanda Russell, Health & Wellness Teacher \_\_\_\_\_
- Tim Angerhofer, Math Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## **Statement of Strengths and Needs for Assessment of and for Student Learning Standard**

### *Strengths*

- Formative and summative assessments are used in high frequency to aid in understanding student learning, to inform and adapt instruction, and to identify and address inequities in student achievement.
- Continued emphasis on immediate and corrective feedback provided to students that leads to an improvement of student work.
- Varied, authentic assessments are being continually implemented across all curricula.
- Collaboration by staff to create, analyze, and revise assessments (formative, summative, and common) to ensure student achievement in accordance with the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations and to ensure the curriculum and instruction is aligned.
- Collegiality of the staff at Amesbury High School is at a very high level.
- Unit-specific learning goals and corresponding rubrics are utilized.

### *Needs*

- Complete implementation and increase adaptation of school-wide rubrics.
- Formalize assessment and reporting of whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations.
- Improve collection and aggregation of data specifically for improving performance based on the analysis of equity gaps in state and local assessment results.
- Collect and examine data from sending schools, receiving schools, and post-secondary institutions.



## **STANDARD ON SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP**

### **Narrative Essay**

Amesbury High School understands its integral place in the larger community of Amesbury. It is committed to creating a safe, caring and respectful environment that is open and welcoming to all students, and to providing a quality education, while promoting learning across and beyond the curriculum. A key factor in this commitment is communication among students, faculty, administrators, parents, and community leaders.

The AHS Student Handbook includes academic information and standards, calendars, school resources, student rights and responsibilities, athletics, clubs, co-curricular activities, and honor societies. System-wide policies are also listed regarding health, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), transportation, field trips, disabled and special education, promotion of civil rights such as protection against bullying and sexual harassment, technology use, drug and alcohol policies, teen dating violence, school welfare, and others.

Amesbury High School is rich in traditions, yet provides opportunities for student innovations. Color Day, Top 10 Dinner, Sophomore Ring Breakfast, Junior Prom, Senior Dress Up Day, Sing Out, Frost Fest, Spirit Week, Senior Celebration, Senior Week, and Senior T-shirts are some of our longstanding traditions. In an effort to reach all students, activities that inform and shape student character are continually added. Beginning in 2006, Teacher Choice Awards, which involve all faculty in honoring an outstanding student for criteria that ranges from self-improvement to community service, were established. Beginning in 2009, AHS participated in the PBS *Quiz Show* allowing students to compete directly with other schools. Beginning in 2011, Rachel's Challenge, an anti-bullying training experience, was brought to AHS to raise awareness and unify the school community. Well-established and ongoing activities include math and

science meets, math fairs, athletics, student tutoring, Band, Chorus, Drama Club, Student Class Officers, Student Council, AHS Weekly (school newspaper), Tapestry (literary magazine), Powwow (school yearbook), Awards Night, Sing Out, and Baccalaureate.

The City of Amesbury and Amesbury Public Schools have established websites which serve as communication tools between school and community. One main feature is individual teacher websites for AHS faculty, which provide information for both student and parent use. The Principal's Newsletter appears quarterly to convey information and address concerns to parents and students. Connect Ed phone calls and electronic access to the daily student bulletin facilitate dissemination of information between school and home. Amesbury Educational Foundation, Inc. (AEFI), a community based organization supported by local businesses, honors the contributions of community members to Amesbury schools and awards grants to teachers who propose innovative programs and projects for students.

The AHS School Improvement Plan (2011-2012) focuses on instruction that impacts student learning. Initiatives have become practice in key areas including district-wide writing-across-the-curriculum, students achieving base-line skills, and use of technology in record keeping, communication, and instruction. Regular opportunities for sharing instructional practice include Critical Friends Groups (CFGs), departmental meetings, learning walks, collecting and looking at student work, and creating common summative assessments. Through working with Teaching and Learning Alliance (TLA), teachers collaborate in an interdisciplinary lab classroom cohort and some departmental work addressing content and literacy initiatives.

As of April 2012, the current 603 students enrolled at Amesbury High School include the following racial/ethnic make-up: 581 white, 14 Hispanic, and 8 black. Enrollment has increased

to 662 students as of September 2012. Amesbury High School works to create an equitable and inclusive community for all of its students, fostering heterogeneity where every student over the course of the high school experience is enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core course (English/language arts, social studies, math, science, or world languages).

Most courses offer two levels – Honors and College Preparatory. In addition, Advanced Placement courses are offered in academic areas and run based on enrollment. The graduation requirement for social studies requires all students to take at least one social studies elective. All social studies electives are heterogeneously grouped. Thus, all students will have to take at least one heterogeneously grouped core subject area course in order to graduate AHS. There are additional heterogeneously grouped classes outside of the core subjects which are required to meet graduation requirements. These include classes such as health, child development, technology, physical education, and visual and performing arts.

According to the Endicott Survey, 78% of students believe they have a number of opportunities to take courses in which students of varying levels of ability are enrolled. According to an internal Amesbury High School survey taken April 2012, when asked if they thought the school culture of AHS was “inclusive, equitable and engaging to all members of the school community,” 44% of faculty members answered “always” and 55% answered “sometimes”.

Presently Amesbury High school does not have a formal, on-going advisory or student mentoring program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school’s 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations. A number of programs and activity groups do exist in

which an adult supervises and mentors a group of students. This provides the adult with familiarity and the opportunity to support each student in decision-making and achieving goals. Teachers, counselors, and administrators are available to assist students daily during “A” Block. The intention is to begin a pilot program September 2013.

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; and apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The district engages in professional development throughout the year. Professional development workshops are part of the school calendar and occur during five, half Professional Release Time days (PRT) and three, full day workshops. Curriculum mapping sessions are part of professional development with each academic area meeting during the school year as well as writing collaboratively and individually over the summer. Faculty members are encouraged via electronic mail and/or bulletin board postings to take part in professional development by enrolling in courses that have been advertised. Collective bargaining is in process and professional development is one of the topics being addressed.

Twice each month, during “A” Block (7:30-8:00am), time is utilized for Critical Friends Groups (CFGs). Teachers gather in small groups to discuss articles shared by the principal, best teaching practices, and classroom concerns. Once a month, all group facilitators meet with the principal to discuss the results of their meeting. In working with the TLA, teachers have designed Learning Walks and inter-visitation of classrooms providing opportunities for collegial observations in all academic subject areas.

Based on a review of the school's supervision and evaluation process, as well as the number of new and veteran teacher observations and evaluations completed each year, evidence shows that Amesbury's school leaders are effectively using research-based supervision and evaluation processes to improve student learning. School leaders use a supervision and evaluation process and instrument based upon the research and writings of Jon Saphier. New teachers are observed four times per year, while veteran teachers are involved in a rotation between observations and self-directed projects and goal setting.

Administrators who supervise and evaluate others attend workshops and seminars including the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) Conference 2012, the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) New AD's Workshop 2012, the Massachusetts Secondary Schools Athletic Directors Association (MSSADA) Athletic Directors Conference 2012, the MSSADA Legal Workshop 2012, and the MSSADA DNA of Leadership Workshop 2012. The school and Local AFT #1033 are renegotiating the supervision and evaluation processes based on new Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) expectations.

The school year at Amesbury High School is organized to support research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students. Professional development is offered in a number of ways. Teachers are allowed professional training days outside of the school which include workshops, seminars or conferences that enhance their expertise.

Twice a month CFGs meet during "A" block. Three full days of Professional Development for faculty are included in the school calendar. Five PRT days allow for collaboration on curriculum and instruction. The Professional Development Council was formed

and met during the school year (2011-12) to assess the needs of the faculty in the district. The Council surveyed faculty, discussed the findings, identified experts within each building and the district as a whole, all in an effort to balance mandated training with teacher identified needs. Faculty has noted a lack of common planning time within particular curricular areas.

Each faculty member at Amesbury High School teaches three, eighty-seven minute blocks per quarter, for a total of twelve classes during a school year. Class sizes vary. For example, a student could be enrolled in an Introduction to Biology class containing nine students. Another section of this course, offered at another time, might contain twenty-six students. It is challenging for teachers to meet the learning needs of all students when class sizes are large. The 4x4 block schedule model presents two challenges which impact class size. First is finding space within this model to schedule all the requested courses. Technology classes have forced limits of class size due to the number of available computers and equipment. The sciences and arts classes are also limited by supplies, staffing, and safety regulations. Second is the limited staff available to cover all courses. Between August 2009 and August 2011, Amesbury High School lost 8.8 teaching positions, that is, from 52 positions down to 43.2. Looking at the lower grades, there does not appear to be any decrease in student population. The increase of students at the middle school has, and will continue, to impact the size of the student body at Amesbury High School.

The principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The leadership team is comprised of the superintendent, business manager (now Assistant Superintendent), curriculum director (now Director of Assessment and Accountability), and principals. Assistant principals (Deans) of the school district are included in meetings of the leadership team as the agenda

dictates. The leadership team has standing meetings bi-weekly in a round-table setting to discuss policies, procedures, and budget. Vertical curriculum discussions of core values, district writing-across-the-curriculum initiatives, and district anti-bullying policy and implementation activities are held.

Principals and assistant principals attend the Summer Institute for Leadership Workshops annually. Each August, the leadership team attends a team building retreat where goals are set and developed for the upcoming school year. The principal meets with the deans. The deans meet with the department liaisons. The liaisons meet with department faculty once per month. In addition, administration is responsible for direct training and instruction in topics such as bullying, supervision and evaluation, school safety issues, the development of the advisory program, analysis of MCAS data, and Special Education Law.

Amesbury High School involves teachers, students, and parents in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership. The School Council, including teachers, students, and parents, meets once a month to discuss school improvement, budget, operation, instruction, and current concerns. A Bullying Policy Committee comprised of administrators, teachers, students, and parents developed a plan to implement a new state-mandated policy that pertains to acts of bullying. The plan was completed and implemented in December 2010.

The Student Advisory Council (SAC) is comprised of students from each class and a faculty advisor. An elected Student Advisory Council of at least five members is required by Massachusetts State Law. SAC serves as liaison between the students of Amesbury High School and the school administration. The local council has expanded to include three representatives

from each class plus the delegates to the Regional Student Advisory Council. In recent years, members of the Amesbury Council have also been elected to positions on the State Student Advisory Council. The chairperson of SAC is a non-voting member of the School Committee and attends School Committee meetings. SAC has a chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary.

The Student Advisory Council meets once or twice a month as needed. Its primary role is to resolve student concerns and propose changes to the Student Handbook. SAC has a good working relationship with the administration and most issues are resolved with the administration. Any legal issues become the concerns of the School Committee. The intent of SAC is to promote a positive school climate. The chairperson of SAC is also co-chair of the committee that runs the annual fundraising lottery, at which time most of the activities for the year are scheduled.

Student Council (STUCO), advised by a faculty member, works over the course of the year to plan pep rallies, organize dances, and implement other student activities initiatives. For example, in 2012, STUCO was responsible for bringing in *Rachel's Challenge* – a presentation designed to educate students about the nature and consequences of bullying and to inspire students to be kind to others. In recent years, members of the Student Council have been elected to positions on regional and state boards.

Elections for class officers and SAC are held once a year and run by the Student Council. All students are invited to run, but candidates must have two faculty and ten student endorsements from their respective class. Those seeking an office position must also write and deliver a speech. The entire student body is eligible to vote in these elections.

The Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) is an elected board of teachers that meets and discusses school policy and its implementation. Acting as a liaison between administration and



staff, it works to resolve issues and to support the school's core values. Consisting of seven members, it meets once a month, or as needed, and has four purposes: to select members of the National Honor Society and act on disciplinary cases involving NHS; to discuss issues brought to it by teachers and attempt to resolve these with the administration; to annually review the Student Handbook; and to run an annual Teacher Choice awards program designed to promote high qualities of scholarship based on effort and cooperation, not necessarily the highest grade. The only officer of FAC is the chairperson.

For one year, the school implemented department liaison positions for each curriculum area to assist in both NEASC self-study work and the implementation of the teaching curriculum from the Program of Studies. Collective bargaining is currently taking place to address the future framework for the continuation of the department liaison positions. These positions are intended to provide continuity and ownership in the curriculum decisions at Amesbury High School.

The recently hired Dean of Student Activities at Amesbury High School was selected by a committee comprised of an administrator, teachers, students and parents. This group was responsible for reviewing resumes, interviews, and selecting finalists who were then interviewed further by the principal and Dean of Students/Curriculum. The hiring of a variety of coaching positions has been done by a selection committee made up of coaches, teachers, administrators, students, and parents who have been responsible for reviewing and hiring candidates. Parent groups such as the All-Sports Boosters take responsibility for, and ownership in, supporting the students in activities at Amesbury High School.

School budget hearings are open forums which also involve parents, teachers, and students. Workshops are a dialogue between the finance subcommittee of the School Committee and school and district administrators. Members of the community may attend but cannot participate in the discussion at this point. Hearings are then held on the budget where individuals may speak their opinions and concerns.

Based on a review of leadership endeavors designed and/or implemented by teachers to improve the school, evidence shows that Amesbury teachers are exercising initiative and leadership in order to improve the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. Teachers may attend School Committee meetings and newly implemented “coffee meetings” with the superintendent. They serve on the School Building and Space Needs Committees, School Council, and Faculty Advisory Council. Teachers from each department have been appointed to serve as liaisons to the administration. These teachers lead department meetings and work on budget and curriculum. Teachers lead and advise the many student groups in the school in order to meet student needs and interests.

The school board, superintendent and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations for the students of AHS. The principal annually presents a School Improvement Plan including action steps for implementation to the School Committee and a school budget to both the School Committee and the City of Amesbury Municipal Council. As needed, the principal and/or deans attend School Committee sub-committee meetings on policy as they relate to the faculty and staff at AHS.

The principal meets monthly with the Administrative Council which consists of all the building principals, business administrator, special education director, and superintendent to discuss important issues for staff and students. The principal meets regularly with parents and

community members within the School Council. At bi-monthly events, the principal and Dean of Students/Curriculum meets with personnel from the Early College Program, a three-year program for Amesbury students in partnership with Northern Essex Community College.

The principal participated in the Core Values committee which developed the 21st Century Learning Expectations. He attended DESE seminars focusing on Core Values. The principal directs department liaison meetings with representatives from each academic area in the curriculum to discuss 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. He attends the Massachusetts Association of Secondary School Administrators meetings for the purpose of collegial discussion. The principal meets on a regular basis with the deans.

The principal is given sufficient decision-making authority by the state, school committee, and the superintendent to run the school, making day-to-day decisions as well as long term decisions. The principal is responsible for personnel, the budget, general operations of the school, and the implementation of the district's policies and practices.

The superintendent collects information from the principal and AHS leadership team in order to review the implementation of the policies and their effectiveness. With the principal, the superintendent gathers and discusses information which affects the budget. She analyzes the needs of the district and puts forth a budget that reflects the school system's mission to educate all students. The principal has input as to how the budget is implemented at the building level.

The School Committee develops policies that impact students' needs. This committee directs the superintendent to present those policies to the district leadership, who then implement those policies. The process may work in reverse. Teachers or students may present an idea to an administrator who brings it to the district leadership meeting for discussion. The proposed idea

may be presented to a School Committee sub-committee which reviews, analyzes, initiates, and rewrites the policy, if needed. Finally, the sub-committee presents the policy to the School Committee for approval.

The superintendent has an open door policy. Scheduled district leadership meetings allow the superintendent to lead discussions centered on budget, policies, and building problems as they arise. The team works together to solve district issues. Open communication between AHS administration and the central office include the principal as part of the district leadership team. The school administrators, assistants, and central office work collaboratively.

## **STANDARD ON SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Amesbury High School is a community made up of students, parents, teachers, administrators, support personnel, and Amesbury businesses and organizations. All are committed to creating positive learning experiences for students. The staff and administration implement policies, which are built on respect and support for students' rights, responsibilities, and intellectual, physical, and civic growth, to prepare them for life outside of Amesbury High School. There are student councils, clubs, honor societies, programs for the arts, athletics, and community service projects.

The Program of Studies and the graduation requirements provide a balanced and challenging experience for students. Courses are offered at the college preparatory, honors, and AP levels with some heterogeneously grouped. To provide for a diverse schedule, AHS has adopted an 87-minute four-by-four block system. Courses may be one quarter, one semester, three quarters, or a full year. Since the implementation of block scheduling, the teaching staff has participated in various professional workshops to effectively utilize our schedule. Current training continues to support teaching within the block. Staff reductions have resulted in increased student load for teachers, counselors, and deans. There has been a reduction in course offerings and electives.

Professional development has given the staff opportunities to reflect and improve on current practices. During Professional Learning Communities, teachers meet twice each month to discuss class work, classroom management, shared curriculum, policies, and readings. The superintendent and AHS leadership team have an open communication policy. They share

cooperation, discussion, and investigations into policies to develop positive change for the students.

Although we have various clubs and organizations where teachers advise, mentor and make positive connections, there is not yet a formal advisory program here at the high school. Plans are to begin implementation in September of 2013.

Based on the CPSS Rating Guide for the Standard on School Culture and Leadership, Amesbury High School judges its adherence to the Standard as LIMITED.

School Culture and Leadership Committee Members

Diane Pendergast, Math Teacher, Co-Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Cindy Yetman, Technology Teacher, Co-Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Thom Connors, Physical Education Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Louise Cramer, Special Education Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Danielle Mason, English Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Suzanne Meyer, Performing Arts Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Kathy Morrill, Administrative Assistant \_\_\_\_\_

## **Statement of Strengths and Needs for School Culture and Leadership Standard**

### *Strengths*

Long-standing traditions paired with opportunities for student and teacher innovation

- Student teacher relationships are fostered in and out of the classroom.
- Communication is ongoing in several modalities with students, teachers, parents, administration, and the community regarding Amesbury High School's practices.
- Co-curricular activities provide teachers and students with opportunities and leadership skill practice.
- Decision - making opportunities are available for various stakeholders regarding the school.
- Building principal collaborates with colleagues and department liaisons regarding curriculum and core values.
- Collaboration opportunities with teachers are offered.
- Communication is an inherent facet of supervision and evaluation as teacher leadership opportunities within the school.
- School Committee and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient authority to lead the school.

### *Needs*

- Formalize and implement student advisory program.
- Increase staffing to reduce class size and restore electives.
- Increase common planning time.
- Establish vertical and horizontal curriculum leadership.
- Complete collective bargaining regarding teacher leader model or supervision and evaluation language and practice.

**STANDARD ON SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**  
**Narrative Essay**

Amesbury High School has a variety of timely, coordinated and directed intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, that support each student's achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations. Students have access to direct support services from teachers during "A" block. This portion of the school day is utilized for student-teacher contact, parent meetings, and professional collaboration. The exception is for students in band and chorus.

The school has a coordinated Intervention Team, which meets bi-weekly to discuss referred students. The team is made up of the school psychologist, guidance counselors, school adjustment counselor, job developer, a special education teacher, the school nurse, deans, and a representative from the Pettengill House, a local community service agency. Any staff member may complete a referral form and submit student concerns to the Intervention Team. The Intervention Team discusses on average four to five individual students in detail at each meeting and addresses issues including learning difficulties, family concerns, behavioral health issues, or medical needs. Team members are assigned to individual students and gather additional information through student interviews and parent contact. The team develops specific intervention strategies to assist these students, and reports back to all teachers working with the identified students regarding implementation. Some students discussed by the Intervention Team are referred for special education or other appropriate services.

Amesbury High School participates in Communities Collaborative Initiative (CCI) through the District Attorney's Office. Meetings are held monthly and include representatives from all schools in the district, along with representatives from probation, the local police



department, Department of Children and Families, Department of Mental Health, community service agencies, and the Amesbury Public Schools Director of Student Services. At these meetings, information and interventions are shared regarding at-risk students and families in the community, where there is opportunity for coordination of community and school resources.

Amesbury utilizes the Crisis Prevention Intervention model (CPI). Training and recertification are provided by staff members to a variety of staff including teachers, all special education paraprofessionals, nurses, guidance counselors, administrators, secretarial staff, cafeteria staff, and custodians. This approach trains individuals in recognizing at-risk students and learning how to de-escalate potentially high risk situations before students or other individuals resort to hurting themselves or others.

Utilizing the School Link Model, Amesbury Public Schools has a unique relationship with Pettengill House, a local community service agency. Pettengill House social workers address a variety of needs for students and families in the community, including assistance in obtaining appropriate services from state agencies for financial, medical, or mental health reasons. Their services include helping families obtain Mass Health Insurance, providing food through a community food bank, and offering school supplies and other essentials to students in need. Pettengill House is also contracted with the Amesbury Public Schools to conduct home assessments for students referred for special education services.

Amesbury High School provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services. Students and guardians have access to the Amesbury Public Schools' website with links to high school departments, individual teacher websites, health services, guidance, library, athletics, and the Special Education department, as

well as the superintendent's office. The site provides valuable information to students and families regarding services, necessary forms, and teacher assignments. The Amesbury High School core values, beliefs on learning, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations, student bulletins, calendar of events, guidance department information, Parent Advisory Council information, and necessary school forms, including the bullying incident report form, are all available on the high school link. The Aspen portal can be accessed through the high school link and provides students and parents/guardians with up-to-date information regarding assignments and grades.

At the beginning of each school year, the main office at Amesbury High School distributes information regarding free and reduced lunches, health insurance, and bus services. As new students register, they are provided with the necessary paperwork. Comcast Channels 12 and 18 are used by Amesbury High School students and staff to produce programming and promote school events and services. "AHS Magazine" is a television show hosted by the school principal, featuring a variety of guests who provide information at both the school and district level. The Connect-Ed telephone system is also utilized by Amesbury High School to make important announcements at both school and district level regarding updates or changes to programs and services. Members of administration, guidance, the health office, teachers, and special educators regularly contact families via telephone or email in reference to student concerns, student performance, and to facilitate conversations to provide students and families with appropriate and necessary services.

Support services staff use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student. Computers and associated media devices are available to support staff for the purpose of providing student services. This includes Aspen, a multi-capacity program, with applications beyond simple grading input and notation. Aspen is used by guidance counselors for

scheduling, locating students, registering students, and checking graduation requirements. Administration and staff use the program to record 504 plans, attendance, grading, legal restrictions, curriculum maps, and notices. Aspen can also be used for online posting of projects completed at home or in the library. As Aspen's capabilities expand, teachers receive weekly updates from colleagues who have attended Aspen new release workshops. Future use of Aspen will include the inputting of IEPs (active as of 9/1/12) and discipline referrals, and expanding online submission of assignments and assessments.

Special Education teachers and administrators utilized E-SPED until the fall of 2012 to document learning disabilities and to write individualized education plans. As of fall 2012, AHS is utilizing special education module within Aspen as a replacement for E-SPED. The addition of this module places all student and staff information under one information management system. Devices for hearing-impaired students, such as sound field technology and personal FM systems, are available so these students may be included in a typical classroom environment. Individual students may access laptop computers, "*Bookshare*" enlarged print texts, MCAS assistance for students with vision difficulties, "Kurzweil" books for the blind and dyslexic, "Dragon Naturally Speaking," "Inspiration," and "Co-writer" software. A limited number of Smart Boards (six) are available for teacher use. Each classroom is equipped with projectors linked to VCR/DVD, audio, and PC projection. As of the fall of 2012, the majority of classrooms throughout the school were equipped with document cameras.

The three computer labs at AHS are used to maximum capacity nearly every day. Due to this high demand, students, teachers, and support staff have only limited access to them throughout the day. The Guidance Center has four computers available for students to research colleges, write resumes, and complete college applications and financial aid forms. Through

Aspen, counselors may follow student progress and attendance. School health services also use Aspen to identify students with life-threatening health issues. Confidential electronic medical records are maintained through the use of the Health Office program. The library website is updated with information and offers access to research and reference databases. Multiple databases are available for AHS students and staff at school and at home.

Staff can communicate information through daily bulletins, Principal's Newsletters, and the AHS Weekly, all of which are made available online or via e-mail. All staff may be contacted by e-mail, fax, or telephone. A school-wide speaker system is used on a limited basis to make essential announcements. Staff has the ability to deliver telephone and e-mail notifications via the Connect-Ed message system. Other community access venues available for staff include an audio/video studio and two cable channels where educational notifications are posted.

School counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who deliver a written, developmental program, and meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling. Three guidance counselors serve 612 students as of May 2012. Two of the counselors service approximately 240 students each and the third counselor has approximately 130 students and also serves as a liaison for the department. One, full-time administrative assistant works in the guidance center at the high school. One school psychologist and one adjustment counselor serve the 612 students at the high school as well as the 740 students at the middle school.

Guidance counselors meet with students regularly within a consistent cycle. In the fall, the focus is on student schedules, with attention paid to academic needs and graduation

requirements. Counselors meet regularly with seniors to continue post-secondary planning. These meetings continue throughout the year on a scheduled and walk-in basis. As semester one progresses, counselors meet with students in grades nine through eleven to review schedules, discuss academic progress, and explore career ideas. In October, the PSAT is offered and administered at AHS. Throughout the year, meetings continue and transcripts are sent to colleges as requested by the seniors. In January, the college process is started for juniors, with guidance counselors meeting with each student several times during the last half of the year. Junior Parent Night in February is an opportunity for eleventh grade students and their parents to learn about the college process, career planning, and military opportunities. AHS is currently the only school in the area to host FAFSA Day Massachusetts, part of the College Goal Sunday Program, to help college-bound students and their parents.

Work with students continues related to academic progress, personal, and social issues. Counselors work with parents, teachers, and administrators in support of student success. Group meetings, using one of the computer labs, are held to help seniors navigate the Common Application. Meetings are held with ninth grade students to facilitate the use of the online Aspen portal to check progress and to select courses for the following year. Counselors facilitate an Eighth Grade Parents' Night where prospective ninth grade students and their parents hear about academic offerings and co-curricular opportunities at AHS from current students. As a follow-up to this event, counselors meet with the students in preparation for their transition to the high school.

The guidance staff is involved in referral services, especially Intervention Team, to help students who are struggling academically. When personal, family, and/or social issues are identified, the guidance staff can refer to mental health and social service providers in the

community. Guided by a Memorandum Of Understanding, the school district works closely with the police department. Social service agencies, such as the Pettengill House, are also available for support with both academic and non-academic issues.

There are several forms of assessment data available to help guide staff in improving services and instruction for all students. The ninth grade students take the Writing Assessment Test (WAT), to assess their writing skills and to assist with course placement. Ninth grade college prep students are also given the Accuplacer to provide data to determine eligibility for the Early College program. Students take this assessment again in their junior year to gauge their growth and achievement. Counselors review MCAS results and, when needed, create an Educational Proficiency Plan for students to help them obtain an AHS diploma.

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.

Amesbury High School is staffed with one school nurse to meet the needs of the 612 students, exceeding the National Association of School Nurses' recommendation of one nurse for every 750 students. The district's Nurse Leader is located in the superintendent's office at the high school and is available on a limited basis to provide assistance or support as needed. The district currently has two substitute nurses who are available to cover absences for illness and continuing education programs. The nurse is accessible during school hours to provide both preventative and direct intervention health services. Preventative health services include health screenings for vision, hearing, and postural deviations, as well as height, weight, and Body Mass Index (BMI) measurements per Massachusetts Department of Public Health regulations. For the school year 2010-2011, 588 health screenings were completed, and sixty-eight written referrals were sent to parents for follow up with primary care providers. Direct intervention services include evaluation

and treatment of injuries, illness, and behavioral health issues, with triage and emergency response as necessary.

Ongoing student health assessments continue throughout the school year, including monitoring and education for students with chronic health conditions, such as diabetes and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. Sports physicals are held three times a year for free in the health office with the school district's physician. The total number of illness or injury related assessments in the 2010-2011 school year was 7,312. Referrals are made directly to parents, primary care providers, and community agencies including the Pettengill House, "Health Quarters," and Lions Clubs International. The nurse serves on the school's Intervention Team and participates in the referral, planning, and evaluation process. She regularly attends Section 504 and Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings as requested by staff and/or parents. The school nurse facilitates communication with school staff and parents regarding health issues, field trips, co-curricular, and academic activities.

The health office utilizes an Electronic Medical Record (EMR) system called Health Office, accessible only to nursing staff and the principal for documenting student visits. Data can also be collected and analyzed on a variety of levels, including illness and injury statistics. Currently, some of the data that is being collected and evaluated at a local and state level includes information on the number of visits to the school nurse for behavioral health needs and the number and treatment of sports-related head injuries. Data related to the number of behavioral health visits are analyzed at the state level to support increased funding and access to mental health services for students. Data involving sports-related head injuries have been utilized in the development of a district wide Concussion Policy for students, parents, coaches, and staff, detailing education, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of head injury. This policy, developed

by the school administration, athletic trainer, a guidance counselor, and school nurse, also provides specific academic accommodations for students recovering from head injuries. Beginning in the 2011-2012 school year, AHS introduced a Concussion Vital Signs Program purchased with grant funding. This baseline neurocognitive assessment program is offered on a volunteer basis to student athletes. Follow-ups are offered on an as-needed basis for students who incur head injuries during a season.

Library Media services are integrated into curriculum and instructional practices and have adequate, certified/licensed personnel, and support staff. The Roland H. Woodwell Library Media Center welcomes students and staff while promoting reading, and providing assistance in accessing, evaluating, and effectively using educational resources. The library program is integrated into the school's curriculum and supports Amesbury High School's goals. The library is open and staffed before, during, and after school: 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. daily. It is utilized in the evenings for community functions such as School Committee meetings, honor society inductions, professional development, and post-secondary education. The staff consists of one, full-time certified Library Media Specialist and two, part-time library assistants. Although the position requires a high school diploma, both assistants have four-year degrees.

Library classes are taught in conjunction with the classroom teacher. The Media Specialist is actively engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum by attending curriculum meetings when appropriate and departmental meetings on a regular basis. Teachers and the Library Media Specialist work together to plan lessons. The library provides necessary resources such as bibliographies and/or book carts specific to the lesson as a result of this planning. These interactions help the Library Media Specialist understand classroom curriculum and thus facilitate the selection and purchasing of materials in all areas of the curriculum.



In support of the school's curriculum, the AHS Library offers a significant range of resources and services. According to the results of the February 2012 NEASC Self Study Survey of Amesbury High School, 90.2% of students and 96.2% of staff indicated that the library provides a wide range of materials, technology, and other information services. The library has 12,500 print titles, twenty-two desktop computers, and three carts of twelve laptops available for students. The library also organizes raffles and has a yearly book drive to add to the library's collection.

*Alexandria*, the library circulation software, is available on all library computers. New library circulation software, *Destiny*, has been installed and will replace *Alexandria* starting in the 2012-2013 school year. *Destiny*, like *Aspen*, is a Follett software product. Library staff is currently being trained to use *Destiny*. Other software used is the Microsoft Office programs *Word*, *Excel*, and *PowerPoint*, as well as *Inspiration*, a graphic organizer. The databases available for use are *SIRS*, *Literary Reference Center*, and the state-funded databases such as *InfoTrac*. A five-book eBook program is currently being piloted. The library's classroom has a Smart-Board and projector to aid in teaching. TV/VCR/DVD technology is available, as are overheads, portable stereo systems, and the appropriate media. Incoming grade nine students receive a comprehensive library orientation to facilitate their future use of these resources and services.

The library is responsive to students' interests and needs in support of independent learning. The library participates in national library programs such as *Teen Read Week* and *National Library Month*. Displays throughout the library, and a glass display case outside of the library, are changed regularly. Featured are specific authors, special events such as *Banned Book Week*, curriculum subjects such as Women's History Month, and topics that are popular

such as books that are made into movies. A section of shelving is reserved for the display of *Student Picks*, student book reviews. Courtesy of the Art Department, student art work is on display throughout the library. Class projects are also displayed; the *Museum Walk* from the American Studies class is a popular exhibit. Programs such as *Read Poster Contest*, *Book Cover Contest*, and *Student Picks* support interest in books. Book Worms, an after school book club for students, and Teachers As Readers (TAR), an after school book club for staff to read young adult literature, are both supported by the library with multiple copies of their books and monthly displays of their current books. The library staff writes a weekly column for the school's newspaper, the *AHS Weekly*, and occasional articles for local newspapers. *How to Guides* (e.g. *How to Cite*), daily school announcements, menus, sports schedules, etc. are posted in the library. Three local newspapers and forty magazines and journals are on permanent display for student and staff use. Back issues of periodicals are kept for research purposes, on average, for three years. The Library's web page provides links for such things as: *How to Guides*, available databases, useful websites, available eBooks, Library News, Book of the Month, and the Library Bookplate Program. The size of the facility allows multiple classes to be accommodated simultaneously while still providing quiet study space for students. The library staff's priority is to actively assist students with their individual needs and interests.

The library is responsive to improving services. In the spring, a "How can we help you?" document is issued to the staff so that their ideas and comments concerning library services, materials, and resources can be factored into the library media center program for the following year. For students, as well as the entire school community, a suggestion box is located in the library. Computer-generated analysis of the collection is also used to aid in its development. The library keeps a scheduling/planning book to schedule classes, as well as to schedule use of the

library teaching classroom. As of mid-April, 2012, over 25,600 student visits to the library have been recorded. Included in this figure are over 600 scheduled classes, sixty of which were taught by the Library Media Specialist. "Assignment Alert" sheets are generated as a result of consultations between the media specialist and teachers to plan co-taught lesson content. Through various methods, the library collects information and feedback from the school community to achieve learning outcomes. As a result, the library makes adjustments to lessons taught when necessary.

The support services for students, including special education, 504 of the ADA, and English Language Learners, have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff. There are five certified Special Education teachers currently working primarily with Special Education students, one of whom leads the Life Skills Program. The Life Skills Program includes students with a range of developmental abilities; the level of participation in regular education classes depends on students' needs, progress, and goals. The Job Development Program helps to prepare both regular and Special Education students for occupational placement through work training. The Job Developer also serves as the transition specialist, helping students to develop many skills necessary for life after high school. There is currently a contracted nurse for one student's individual needs. In order to further support Special Education students, paraprofessionals assist in many classrooms throughout the school.

Support services are also shared within the district. One school adjustment counselor and one secondary Special Education coordinator are shared between the middle and high schools. In the fall of 2012, the shared Special Education Coordinator was replaced with a Special Education Facilitator for each respective school. At the district level, specialists include two contracted reading specialists, a certified occupational therapy assistant, an occupational therapist, two part-

time occupational therapists, a physical therapist, a speech and language pathologist, two contracted specialists for the visually impaired, an orientation and mobility specialist, a contracted teacher for the deaf and hard of hearing, and two contracted board certified behavioral analysts. The Director of Student Services and two clerical support persons are located at the high school and support the entire district. The district is currently in the process of implementing the restructuring of the administrative process for the delivery of special education services. Special Education teachers receive professional development that reflects an understanding of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations. Plans for the upcoming year include access for paraprofessionals to many of the professional development programs offered.

The school adheres to the federal and state laws regarding referral, identification, and monitoring of students for special education services. Over the course of the past several years, there has been an increase in the number of students found eligible for Special Education as a result of social, emotional, and behavioral diagnoses, and parental requests for evaluations. Building administrators monitor student needs and adjust staffing to provide appropriate services throughout the year. The Endicott Survey results indicate that almost 56% of the staff and 64% of the parent respondents believe that staffing levels for Special Education should be increased.

Special Education services at Amesbury High School are primarily administered in two ways. Some students are in a full inclusion model with specialists monitoring their progress. Other students have regular education classes with one period a day of specialized instruction in the learning center. Learning centers are designed to provide support for students' academic success and as a time for Special Education teachers to provide specialized instruction. In the learning center, a Special Education teacher and paraprofessionals work to support students in their classes. In some content areas, Special Education students are taught in regular education

classes, cohort groups, or in co-taught settings. Content teachers provide accommodations and modifications necessary in the classroom for students with special needs. Teachers vary their instruction and assessment strategies to accommodate students.

Special Education teachers may consult with specialists and classroom teachers. In English, math, and social studies departments, there are cohort classes taught by a combination of special and regular education teachers and support staff. Special Education teachers involved in the cohorts find it advantageous to be able to provide support to identified students in the regular content area classes. However, Special Education teachers would like more time to provide direct instruction to students in their caseload in a learning center environment. Support is provided for students who need extra help. While Special Education students receive specialized instruction in the learning center, extra help sessions are offered to all students by teachers before and after school, as well as by student tutors who are members of AHS honor societies. District-wide discussions are focusing on the development of a program which would provide additional academic, behavioral, and therapeutic support for at-risk special and regular education students.

The results from the Endicott Survey reflect that continued work needs to be done to assist students in achieving the school's learning expectations. The Endicott Survey shows that teachers understand that the school's Core Values and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations include the ideas of students learning in diverse styles and the belief that all teachers are responsible for all students. With the development of school-wide rubrics, teachers have another tool to assist them in the assessment and development of all learners. While the school's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations and the school-wide rubrics are in the beginning stages, both

regular and Special Education teachers will be able to use these tools to understand the targeted level of learning that is expected of students.

## **STANDARD ON SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Amesbury High School has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students that support each student's achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations. Amesbury High School provides the minimum number of counseling, health, and information services personnel. AHS informs families, especially those most in need, about available student support services. AHS provides a comprehensive range of counseling and health services to students. AHS currently provides a variety of materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum using Aspen, the AHS website, and Connect-Ed.

School counselors deliver a developmental program and meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling. In addition, there are several on-site mini college fairs during the fall semester. Counselors meet individually with students and in small groups to deliver services. Counselors collaborate with and participate in community and social service agencies and mental health programs to support student services. AHS health personnel provide preventative and direct intervention health services to students, including ongoing student health assessments. The health personnel use the established referral process and employ Health Office to collect and analyze data.

Library/media services are integrated into the curriculum for all grade levels and the library/media specialist participates in the implementation of the school's curriculum. The library staff is responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning. The library staff promotes reading and they are members of the AHS staff Teachers as Readers program. The staff encourages students to write their own book reviews and display these as

“Student Picks.” The library staff regularly changes and updates displays in the library to acknowledge special events, in recognition of authors, and for curriculum subjects. The library participates in national reading and library events such as Teen Read Week, National Library Month, and Banned Book Week.

The School Resources for Learning committee finds that Amesbury High School provides an effective range of coordinated programs, services, and resources that enhance and improve student learning and well-being. These school resources also support the school’s core values and beliefs.

Based on the CPSS Rating Guide for the Standard on School Resources for Learning, Amesbury High School judges its adherence to the Standard as ACCEPTABLE.

School Resources for Learning Committee Members

George Dodier, Guidance Counselor, Co-Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Susan Hanscom, Social Studies Teacher, Co-Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Ami Hawkes, Special Education Counselor \_\_\_\_\_

Paul Jancewicz, Social Studies Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Mia Rowlands, Library Media Specialist \_\_\_\_\_



## Statement of Strengths and Needs for School Resources for Learning

### *Strengths*

- The highly qualified library staff is committed to actively assisting staff and supporting student learning with a wealth of services
- The library is available to students and staff before, during, and after school and can accommodate multiple classes
- The library staff actively promotes literacy with students and staff, as well as with the Amesbury community
- The relationships with community and social service agencies
- A full-time school nurse who provides multiple services
- Multiple means of communication are available for students, staff, parents, and the community
- The experience and familiarity of veteran guidance counselors with the students, Amesbury community, and available services.
- On-site mini-college fairs
- The hosting of regional FAFSA Day Massachusetts
- The Life Skills Program
- The Job Development Program

*Needs*

- Increase funding for additional full-time personnel: adjustment counselor, school psychologist, guidance counselor, school-to-career counselor
- Increase funding for additional hardware, software, server capacity, and wireless access and professional development
- Fund an additional computer lab
- Increase part-time library assistant hours
- Increase Special Education staff
- Fund regular updating of library materials
- Training for paraprofessionals to meet the needs of special education students
- ELL staff and training

**STANDARD ON COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**  
**Narrative Essay**

The community served by Amesbury High School and the district's governing body provide consistent and dependable funding for a wide range of school programs, personnel, services, sufficient professional and support staff, on-going professional development, a range of technology support, and curriculum revision, sufficient equipment, and instructional materials and supplies. Over the past five years, the school district's budgets have been approved due in large part to the collaborative and supportive working relationship between the School Committee Chair (Mayor of Amesbury), Chief Financial Officer, superintendent, and the business manager. A number of public hearings are scheduled several months in advance of the formal presentation and community vote to discuss the proposed budget. The governing body has been effective in promoting these budget hearings, which are well attended, and during which time questions and concerns are addressed. The School Committee chair also invites school, parent and community groups to attend these hearings and make presentations in support of the school's programs and services. The School Committee often references the high school's core values, beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations when advocating for increased funding in the areas of course offerings, staffing, instructional materials and supplies, and professional development. The student representative (non-voting member) has on occasion been asked to speak at the budget hearings, particularly related to maintaining courses and co-curricular activities.

Given the current economic situation, the School Committee has continued its commitment to maintaining staffing levels and course offerings while limiting budget increases for instructional materials and supplies, and technology. The budget has been level funded for

FY '08, '09, '10 and '11. The economy in the area has been impacted by the recent recession. The CFO, the superintendent, and the business manager have worked collaboratively to ensure the school system's programs are maintained.

Throughout the budget building process, the business manager provides detailed information on the impact on the tax rate based on the increases in the proposed budget. Community members have expressed the benefit of having that information well in advance of the vote to approve the budget. School leadership teams use survey data concerning student learning needs to make decisions regarding program expenditures. The Municipal Council either accepts the school budget amount as presented or reduces the total dollar amount. In the event of a reduction, the superintendent and leadership team determine cuts at the school level. The director of operations has a capital plan that looks forward five years. Due to the current economic situation, this plan has been unfunded for many years.

The high school effectively and purposefully develops, plans, and adequately funds programs to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant, maintains, catalogues, and replaces equipment, and provides an exceptionally high daily level of building cleanliness and ensures the health and well-being of all building occupants. These programs are effectively coordinated and supervised by the district's director of operations for the building in ongoing communication and collaboration with the principal. The director of operations meets on a weekly basis with the maintenance department employees to review the scheduled maintenance and repair orders to be completed. Work orders are now submitted electronically by the high school's secretarial staff with input from the administration which has streamlined the timeliness of maintenance work orders and repairs. A follow-up report for each work order is submitted to the director of operations after an inspection. In turn, the director of operations

creates the schedules for the high school's custodial staff and is responsible for determining maintenance priorities. The director of operations is responsible for training and management of the high school maintenance staff. The director of operations is also responsible for purchasing supplies and equipment and creating the budget for the four schools within the district, the high school, the middle school, and two elementary schools.

Major facilities equipment is maintained and replaced based on a formal repair/replacement plan developed by the director of operations. Equipment such as the elevator, the boilers, large food service machinery, the air-exchange equipment, HVAC, fire alarms and extinguishers, sprinklers, security alarms, kitchen fire suppression and hood cleaning, pest management, and Project Adventure are maintained on an annual basis and inspected as required by local or state agencies. Cleaning equipment and outside maintenance machinery are also cleaned and maintained on a regular schedule. The operating and/or capital improvement budgets continue to include monies to update/replace equipment on a regular basis and is part of the overall town budget. This practice has all but eliminated emergency situations with limited monies to replace essential equipment. All major school facilities equipment is inventoried and catalogued at the close of the school year using an online software program. Department liaisons are responsible for informing the school administrators about any classroom or departmental concerns. These reports are submitted electronically and concerns are addressed in a timely manner. The individual departments are responsible for cataloging their own equipment based on budget and grant availability. The information is also entered in the on-line software program. Issues are reviewed on an annual basis and prioritized based on educational priorities with the director of operations. The city's director of management information systems (MIS) maintains a separate inventory of all computer equipment. The director is presently leasing

equipment in several of the schools and will save the school and the school district monies in the long-term.

The custodial staff at the high school is comprised of two, full-time personnel and an outside contracted cleaning company. One multi-purpose facility technician is available during the school day from 6:00am -2:00pm and the remainder of the custodial staff works the second shift which runs from 2:00 pm to 11:00 pm. The general daily cleaning of the high school is provided by an outside cleaning company that has a team consisting of three to five employees on a given evening shift. The custodian on second shift maintenance staff oversees the safety and security of the building and is also available at the high school on a daily basis and, if additional staff is required for a major project, the director of operations ensures their availability. The director of operations also provides two full-time groundskeepers who are responsible for the regular upkeep of the grounds, including all of the athletic fields and tennis courts. The district's maintenance staff includes its own licensed plumber and electrician. The maintenance budget, with the director of operations creatively consolidating contracts, covers necessary salaries, insurances, taxes, supplies, and equipment needed to maintain the facility.

There is ongoing planning to address future programs, enrollment changes, staffing, facility, and technology needs as well as capital improvements. On an annual, basis the Amesbury School District's budget includes a separate line-item to request funding of the long-range, five-year plan. The school committee maintains its commitment to the concept of a long-range, five-year plan. Because this line item does not directly impact student learning, it has been repeatedly cut from the budget.

The district administration began the budget process this year by reviewing the mission and strategic priorities for the district as a whole. Funding requests reflect priorities and goals to meet the needs of students in our educational programs. The district priorities for Fiscal Year '13 are to restore programs that have been lost through budget reductions the past seven years, reduce class sizes if possible, build strategies to meet mandated special education needs, operate safe and clean buildings, and to provide better educational opportunities for all students. Each department provides a prioritized list of budget requests.

Several examples that demonstrate ongoing support of the district's Strategic Plan include utilization of School Spring for monitoring professional applications, hiring process, and ongoing partnerships with The Pettingill House, Memorandum Of Understanding with the Police Department and the Essex County District, Northeast Behavioral Health, Northern Essex Community College, Salem State University, North Shore Community College, and the New Teacher Induction Program for new teachers. Amesbury's Strategic Plan for the last five years has included these effective partnerships among businesses, schools, and other agencies. The plan has increased collaboration among home, school, and human service agencies.

The administration and staff have collected and begun to view a variety of data that allows the school to address future programs and services to support the school's Core Values, Beliefs on Learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations. The administration and staff compile reports for use in reviewing course enrollment trends, staffing levels, and determining the number of courses and sections to be offered. AHS is a pilot school for Aspen and teachers are at varying levels of training. Tip of the week for Aspen is provided by two staff members. The student management software, Aspen, allows administration and staff to track student demographics, grades, transcripts, and schedules, as well as to help develop the master schedule

by providing a breakdown of student course requests. The administration and staff also have the capacity to generate a number of reports including total school enrollment, average daily attendance, absence rates, tardy and dismissal rates, transcripts, class ranks, and honor roll lists. The technology support staff provides assistance in using the variety of software programs to generate reports. Student 504 plans and IEPs are available on Aspen.

Faculty and building administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budgetary process. The budgetary process begins in December with individual teachers indicating their initial needs for the upcoming year based on departmental input. Teachers' requests are submitted to their respective department liaisons who then review those requests and determine budgetary priorities for the following year. It is common practice for a department liaison to meet individually with teachers to discuss these priorities. The next step of the budgetary process occurs during a series of meetings with the school's leadership team, comprised of the building administrators and all department liaisons. Some additional changes or amendments may be included following these meetings. Finally, the principal submits a budget proposal to the superintendent of schools no later than mid-January. Upon the review of the principal's proposal by the superintendent and district business manager, the proposed budget is presented to the finance subcommittee for extensive discussion and review and they, in turn, present it to the full school committee. A number of public hearings are scheduled prior to the formal vote by the Committee in late March. If the budget is reduced by the Municipal Council, the principal and central office administrators determine how the reductions will be applied. Prior to any final decision, input from the leadership team and from teachers is sought on an informal basis.



Currently, the school site and plant supports the delivery of high quality school programs and services. The facility was renovated and an addition was built beginning in the summer of 2004 and completed in December of 2008. The facility supports the delivery of high quality programs and services. General classroom space is adequate with a current daily room usage rate of just under 75%. The Greater Lawrence Educational Collaborative (GLEC) Program and superintendent's offices occupy the other parts of the building. The support service areas, which include guidance, health, and special education services, have adequate space and facilities including both small and large conference rooms, offices with soundproofing, small private testing rooms, a nurse's office with several private areas for students who are ill and an ADA compliant lavatory. The cafeteria, auditorium, gymnasium, and locker rooms provide space to support various programs. AHS also has a large library, a greenhouse, and a television studio that help to support the needs of various programs. Although the building has three computer labs, they are inadequate to meet the needs of the teaching staff to incorporate technology into their instruction as often as they would like.

The school district provides mowed and lined athletic areas for athletic teams and physical education classes. Due to the quality of some fields in the district, several athletic teams choose to rent space at a nearby turf field or other off-site locations. The track has recently been resurfaced and all of its field event areas have been reconditioned. The grounds are kept clean and feature well-maintained landscaping. Parking is sufficient with a number of handicapped spaces at both the main entrance and the entrance to the gymnasium. In an effort to conserve energy and cut electrical costs, the outdoor lighting in the parking lot and the lights in the gymnasium and cafeteria were all updated to either track lighting or LEDs. Additionally, a solar array was installed within the last few years. A comprehensive Integrated Pest Management

(IPM) program is registered with the state for control of insects, weeds, and turf management to provide safe grounds and athletic fields.

The school maintains up-to-date documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with fire, health, and safety regulations. The school district's director of operations is responsible for maintaining documentation and for scheduling required inspections from local, state, and federal agencies. The documents are posted in the director of operation's office with copies also posted on the school's website. Issues are reported immediately to the superintendent and the chair of the School Committee. Work orders are generated and addressed in a timely manner through the School Dude System. Given the fact that the school building has been well-maintained since it opened four years ago, there have been a limited number of issues identified during inspections. The school district's ongoing commitment to maintaining its high school facilities in effective working order and in compliance with all local, state, and federal laws and regulations, has resulted in issues being resolved immediately, thus ensuring that the plant and site support all programs and services.

The professional staff at Amesbury High School continues its commitment to effectively engage parents and families as partners in each student's education and to reach out specifically to those families who have been less connected to the school. Through Connect-Ed telephone calls, e-mails, and Aspen, parents have access to pertinent school-related information. In addition, parents can access teacher and school-wide websites for daily bulletins, announcements, and principal's newsletter. Students receive a new handbook each year which provides a school calendar, schedule, rules, and offerings of co-curricular activities. Parents are required to review the handbook with their child and sign off acknowledging its key components.

Both the handbook and the Program of Studies are available on-line throughout the year. Two open houses are held for parents to meet teachers and to be updated on their child's progress during the year. Other appointments are made with teachers on an as-needed basis.

Parents are involved in a number of committees to support their child's involvement throughout high school. School Council, GradNight, SEAPAC (Special Education in Amesbury Parent Advisory Council), and All-Sports Boosters, are some parent groups that support and contribute to the Amesbury High School community. School publications such as AHS Weekly, the school's newspaper, Tapestry, the literary magazine, and Powwow, the yearbook are records of student events. Many school events are videotaped and can be viewed on the local cable station along with periodic topics highlighted by the principal, in his bi-weekly news magazine. The public relations liaison submits topics to the local papers for publication.

Upon graduation, students are required to accrue 75 hours of community service; a minimum of 10 hours must be completed per year. The community service projects cover a wide range of work in conjunction with community organizations, such as the local parks and recreation department, Our Neighbors' Table, district elementary schools, as well as assisting individual citizens in our community. Big Brother/Big Sister is a program that is available to students through an application process. It is a community service opportunity during school time for high school students to work with younger children in the community. The Community Service Program has increased formal partnerships within the greater community. The past two graduating classes have each exceeded twenty thousand total hours of community service.

The school has maintained productive business, community, and higher education partnerships. These partnerships support student learning and are in the process of being expanded. Students have the opportunity to take college courses through local community

colleges such as Northern Essex Community College, North Shore Community College, Salem State University, and Massasoit Community College for high school and college credit. These courses have been offered to juniors and seniors for the past sixteen years. Distance Learning includes courses at a community college, on-site courses at AHS with a college professor, or online courses. Scholarship assistance is available to students who are unable to pay the fees. An Early College Program has been piloted at AHS for the past three years. Graduates of this program are able to earn up to the number of credits necessary to earn an Associates' Degree prior to graduating from high school. Throughout the fall, the guidance department sponsors mini college fairs open to interested students who have a chance to meet with college representatives, as well as speakers in various technical fields, the armed forces, local businesses, community organizations, and the higher education community.

## **STANDARD ON COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Amesbury High School has been level funded for the past five fiscal years (FY08-FY12). As a result, school faculty has decreased each year with retirees not being replaced and supply and text budgets being reduced. Due to these budget constraints, parents and students have had to absorb a portion of the costs through user fees associated with athletics, transportation, and co-curricular activities. Financial scholarships are made available for students on an individual basis. School administration is involved in the school district's comprehensive budgetary process. The building principal has a significant role in the budgetary process soliciting input from department leaders. The principal makes a formal presentation to the school committee and addresses questions and concerns in a public hearing. These opportunities to explain the high school's budget at these informational meetings have proven to be invaluable in garnering support for the various line items in the high school's budget.

Overall the facility and grounds are sufficiently maintained to provide a positive environment for student learning. The newly renovated building provides many upgrades including the library, refurbished track, dance studio, computer labs, and updated auditorium. The building and the grounds are maintained and the building is clean. The director of operations works with the high school's custodial staff and outside contracted cleaning company. The school facility has been maintained and addresses health and safety issues that occur. However, there are two notable exceptions to this: technology and the athletic fields.

Overall, the faculty of Amesbury High School engages with parents in a variety of ways. The electronic resources provide immediate and up-to-date information for all parents on their students' academic progress on a daily basis.

The high level of support from local businesses, service and community organizations, and institutions of higher education has had a positive influence on the school and the programs it offers. These partnerships provide students with additional learning opportunities, provide funding for special programs, and allow students to use their knowledge in authentic experiences.

Based on the CPSS Rating Guide for the Standard on Community Resources for Learning, Amesbury High School judges its adherence to the Standard as ACCEPTABLE.

Community Resources for Learning Committee Members

- Margaret Furlong, Family/Consumer Science Teacher, Co-Chair \_\_\_\_\_
- Ann Peterson, Administration Support, Co-Chair \_\_\_\_\_
- Ann Bartkiewicz, Art Teacher \_\_\_\_\_
- Barbara Perry, Special Education Teacher \_\_\_\_\_
- Richard Peterson, Industrial Techonolgy Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## **Statement of Strengths and Needs for Community Resources for Learning**

### *Strengths*

- The formal partnerships with local colleges/ universities.
- The engagement of local businesses and organizations that serve as partners with the school district.
- The communication with parents and community through a variety of methods.
- The consistent monitoring of maintenance needs and the prioritization of the identified needs.
- The city, district, school, and teacher websites.
- The conservation of energy to cut operational costs.
- The student representation on numerous school-related committees.

### *Needs*

- Develop budgets that remove the need for fundraising for both curricular and co-curricular activities.
- Develop budgets that increase the number of computer labs and associated technologies.
- Expand and update athletic facilities to accommodate the number of sports that the school offers.
- Restore, fund, and reconfigure the School to Career program to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century student.
- Increase financial support to maintain facility upkeep.