

New England Association of Schools and Colleges



Commission on Public Secondary Schools

Report of the Visiting Committee for

AMESBURY HIGH SCHOOL

Amesbury, Massachusetts

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STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS

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

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

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

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

- Teaching and Learning Standards
 - Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations
 - Curriculum
 - Instruction
 - Assessment of and for Student Learning
- Support of Teaching and Learning Standards
 - School Culture and Leadership
 - School Resources for Learning
 - Community Resources for Learning

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

Preparation for the Evaluation Visit - The School Self-Study

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At Amesbury High School, a committee of ten members, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned all teachers and administrators in the school to appropriate subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities, and facilities available for young people. The self-study of Amesbury High School extended over a period of eleven school months from May 2011 to May 2012.

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

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

The Process Used by the Visiting Committee

A visiting committee of 17 evaluators was assigned by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate the Amesbury High School. The Committee members spent four days in Amesbury, reviewed the self-study documents which had been prepared for their examination, met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students and parents, shadowed students, visited classes, and interviewed teachers to determine the degree to which the school meets the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. Since the evaluators represented both teachers and administrators from public schools and central office administrators, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Amesbury High School.

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 42 hours shadowing 17 students for a half day
- a total of 10 hours of classroom observation (in addition to time shadowing students)
- numerous informal observations in and around the school
- tours of the facility
- individual meetings with 34 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and the assessment of student learning
- group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers
- the examination of student work including a selection of work collected by the school

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

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

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

Amesbury, Massachusetts is a small residential community located in the northeast corner of Massachusetts along the Merrimack River. Amesbury is the northern-most city in the state of Massachusetts bordering New Hampshire to the north, Salisbury to the east, and Merrimac to the west. A former farming and mill town, Amesbury is steeped in history. Historic mills and factories that called Amesbury home include the first horse-drawn carriage factory, the first mechanized nail-making factory, and The Merrimac Hat Factory. Lowell's Boat Shop, considered to be the birthplace of the legendary New England fishing dory, is still operational. Amesbury has had many notable residents. Susannah Martin (victim of the Salem witch trials), Josiah Bartlett (signer of the Declaration of Independence), John Greenleaf Whittier (poet), Nathaniel Currier (Currier and Ives lithographers), Mary Baker Eddy (founder of Christian Science), and Robert Frost (poet) have all called Amesbury their home.

With a population of 16,283, Amesbury is predominantly white (97%) along with the small minority groups of African American (0.6%), Hispanic (0.4%), and Asian (0.3%). In 2010, Amesbury had an unemployment rate of 6.7%. Amesbury's community is vital to its school system with many school-business partnerships that foster student involvement. Local businesses such as Flatbreads, Thrifty Threads, Amesbury Chair, Amesbury Industrial, Tom's Discount Store, Amesbury Waste & Recycle, and the Maplewood Nursing Home have partnered with the school to provide student employment. Students are also employed through non-profit groups like Our Neighbors' Table and the Amesbury Public Library.

The Amesbury School District is ranked 135th out of 354 school districts in the state in per pupil expenditures. Amesbury Public Schools expended \$12,384 per pupil in the 2010-2011 school year compared with the state average expenditure of \$13,055 per pupil in 2010-2011. In fiscal year 2011, state, federal, and other resources accounted for nearly 55 million dollars in tax revenue with just over 47% of the public budget being spent on the school system.

In June of 2011, the Amesbury School system had a population of 2,330 students housed in five schools (two elementary, one middle, one high, and one Horace Mann Charter school). Of the 2,330 students in June of 2011, 609 of them were enrolled at Amesbury High School. System-wide the student population was 93% White, 1% African American, and 0.6% Asian. Nearly 23% of the student body was identified as low income and 16% of the students in the district have been labeled as needing special education. Twenty-three percent of the students in the district received free or reduced lunch.

With a population of 609 (as of June 2011), Amesbury High School student population was 94% White, 1% African American, and 1% Asian. The average drop-out rate over the past two years has been less than 1%, the daily attendance rate of 2011 was at 95.2%, and students averaged 8.3 days absent. In 2011, the graduation rate was 82.5% with 62% attending four-year private or public colleges, 25% attending two-year public or private colleges, 7% attending other post-secondary schooling, 7% working, and 2% entering the military.

In 2011, Amesbury High School had forty-seven teachers with 96% licensed in their teaching area and 91% labeled as 'highly qualified.' The student-to-teacher ratio for the 2010-2011 school year was 13.7 to 1. Amesbury High School uses a 4X4 block schedule structure which amounts to blocks of eighty-seven minutes each. In addition, there is a twenty-seven minute "A" block which is utilized for student-teacher contact, parental meetings, professional collaboration, departmental meetings, and band/chorus class. The yearly student time on learning exceeds the mandated 990 hours. The average class size equals eighteen students and the average class load per teacher per quarter equals roughly sixty students.

Amesbury High School offers a comprehensive program of studies for students in grades 9-12 and offers many electives in each of the content areas. Students in grades 9-12 are required to complete community service hours each year with a minimum of seventy-five hours required by graduation. In 2011, 22.5% of the high school population was enrolled in at least one honors course, 12% were enrolled in at least one AP course, 8% were enrolled in the school's Early College Program, and 4.5% were in dual enrollment. All students are required to take four years of English, three years of math, science, and social studies, and two quarters of a foreign language. Successful completion of two quarters of technology and one quarter of child development are also required for graduation. In total, fifty-six credits are required to attain a high school diploma.

Students at Amesbury High School have several unique educational opportunities that they can take advantage of during their four years. Students may enroll in an Early College Program in collaboration with Northern Essex Community College where they can earn college credits while enrolled in high school. They may also participate in dual enrollment and earn credit (through articulation) from Northern Essex Community College, Salem State University, and Mass Colleges Online. The school offers a partnership with Winnacunnet High School where students in danger of not graduating on time at AHS can complete their high school education by attending classes at night. The University of New Hampshire and the North Shore Community College have also participated in partnerships with the school.

Amesbury High School offers a wide variety of co-curricular activities, clubs, honor societies, and athletics that meet after school, during school, or during "A" Block . In 2010 -2011, approximately 80% of all high school students participated in at least one co-curricular activity. The club offerings include the Art and Camera Club, Newspaper, Gay /Straight Alliance, Science Team, Literary Magazine, Recycling Club, Rhythmics Select Choir, and F.O.R. (Friends of Rachel). Athletically, Amesbury High School offers 20 different varsity sports with many having three levels of competition. Along with a chartered National Honor Society, other honor societies exist in English (John Greenleaf Whittier), French (La Société Honoraire de Français), Spanish (Isaac Albéñiz Chapter), math (Mu Alpha Theta), social studies (Rho Kappa), music (Tri-M) and science.

The high school also sponsors and supports student recognition programs such as the Principal's Award, Baccalaureate, AHS Spirit Award, Top Ten Senior Dinner, Superintendent's Award, Teacher Choice Awards, MCAS Awards (English/math/science), and an Underclass Awards ceremony. These awards recognize individual students for academic, social, and civic achievements.

**AMESBURY HIGH SCHOOL
CORE VALUES, BELIEFS, AND LEARNING EXPECTATIONS**

Core Values on Learning

Integrity

Respect Individuality

Responsibility

Academic Excellence

Problem Solving

Beliefs on Learning Narrative

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 acceptance, collaboration, and respect. School pride permeates the culture of AHS through time-tested traditions blended with student driven innovations and initiatives.

21st Century Learning Expectations

Academic

1. Problem solve by interpreting, evaluating, and implementing solutions.
2. Communicate effectively in written, oral and visual forms.
3. Appropriately use and apply media/technology. (word choice)
4. Access, comprehend, analyze and interpret information in an academically meaningful manner. (word choice)

Social

1. Collaborate effectively in a variety of roles within the school community.
2. Make positive contributions in their community.

Civic

1. Advocate for positive change by demonstrating civic responsibility.

Teaching and Learning Standard

1

Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

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

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

CONCLUSIONS

The school community at Amesbury High School engaged in a collaborative, inclusive process to identify and establish its Core Values and Beliefs about learning which included meetings with faculty, parents, and students. Research was incorporated in the *process* for the creation and revision of the Core Values and Beliefs by staff, including chapters from *Ten Lessons in Leadership* by John D'Auria and *The Skillful Teacher* by John Saphier, Maryann Haley-Speca, and Robert Gower. Data sources included the former mission statement and lists of areas identified by the faculty as essential to the school culture. In addition, data provided by parents and students was incorporated into the Core Values and Beliefs and 21st Century Learning Expectations.

Results from the Endicott survey, administered prior to the revision of the school's core values and beliefs, identifies that a large majority of parents indicated familiarity with the core values adopted by the school; however, only 56.2 percent stated that they reflect community values. School personnel presented participant rosters as documentation of meetings with faculty, parents and students. These meetings provided an opportunity for each constituency to provide input in the formation and identification of the Core Values and Beliefs statements. Documentation exists of attempts to increase parental involvement using email and telephone communication; however, this effort resulted in the participation of only six parents. A faculty committee compiled the findings from each group and created a final comprehensive and collective list reflecting the Amesbury High School community's identified Core Values and Beliefs. The committee presented a final document for endorsement to the faculty and school committee. Once receiving final approval, the committee presented to the school community the final Core Values and Beliefs document. When the school is successful in engaging a full representation of all members of the community in establishing the school's core values and beliefs,

it will ensure a foundational commitment for the decision making processes of the school. (Endicott survey, standard committee, self- study, attendance data, interviews, and meeting agenda)

The school has seven learning expectations endorsed by the various school constituencies for every student which address academic, social, and civic competencies including problem solving, communication, media and technology, and information processing which are supported by analytic rubrics developed by a committee and approved by the faculty that display the level of achievement expected for student attainment. However, rubrics do not show a clear connection linking them to 21st century research. Student work showed some evidence of 21st Century Learning Expectation rubric integration; however, a majority of samples reviewed did not demonstrate alignment with curriculum. The integration of the school-wide learning standards into content-specific rubrics appeared sporadically in some teachers' assignments and absent in others. The analytic rubrics use a consistent format with expectations that are specific to the learning standards and are consistent with the school's Core Values and Beliefs. Students report the use of rubrics by some teachers but not by all. Students will benefit as Amesbury High School continues to implement the 21st Century Learning Expectations in a manner that ensures that they are challenging, measurable, and consistently applied. (self-study, student work, and teacher interview)

While the recently developed Core Values and Beliefs is ubiquitous in the culture of the school through daily operations and interactions with and among students, faculty and staff, there is no evidence that they drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom or guide policies, procedures, decisions and resource allocations. 21st Century Learning Expectations are posted throughout the school and have been assessed in a limited number of class assignments. In addition, the most recent district strategic plan expired in 2011, and changes in central office leadership resulted in a delay in the development of a new plan. The Amesbury School District Strategic Plan was created in 2006 and concluded in 2011. With the arrival of new district leadership in 2011, the district and superintendent's 2011-2012 goals, posted on the town website, lists Goal V as "Create a plan and timeline for the development of strategic plan." A document review finds no written plan or timeline; however the self-study states that a new Strategic Plan Committee will begin formal development in the summer of 2013. As Amesbury High School moves toward further integration of its core values, beliefs and 21st Century Learning Expectations, it will establish a foundation that guides its policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations as well as drive curriculum, instruction and assessment in the classroom. (school board, central office administrators, student interviews, teacher interviews, observations, and student work)

Amesbury High School does not have a written process to review or revise the Core Values and Beliefs and 21st Century Learning Expectations. Teachers identify the review process as an intended long-term component of the implementation of the core values, but this is not yet an established plan or practice. The 2011-2012 Superintendent and district goals posted on the district website identify the creation of a plan; however, central office administrators state that it will be developed by the established Strategic Plan Committee's work in the summer of 2013. Neither teacher interviews nor the self-study indicate that educational research was used to identify or revise the 21st Century Learning Expectations. Teacher interviews indicate that the 21st Century Learning Expectations, approved in the spring of 2012 and implemented at the start of the 2012-13 school year, were based on rubrics in existence since the previous 2003 decennial accreditation. These rubrics were incorporated with current teacher beliefs on what students should know or be able to do for the 21st century. An inclusive process to regularly review and revise the Core Values and Beliefs and 21st Century Learning Expectations based on research, multiple data sources and the profiles of the school community and district will help ensure that they remain as a working document that accurately and consistently reflects the values, beliefs and

expectations necessary to provide a solid foundation from which to make decisions. (school board, central office administrators, student interviews, teacher interviews, self-study, and Standard committee interview)

COMMENDATIONS:

1. The creation of core values and beliefs that reflects a collaborative school and community process
2. The set of analytic rubrics developed to support the seven learning expectations
3. The initial and developing use of the core values and beliefs to guide decisions of the school

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Develop definitive timelines on the implementation of the Social #2 and Civic #1 learning expectations.
2. Ensure all 21st century school-wide learning expectations have associated, specific school-wide analytic rubrics
3. Develop a written plan to regularly review the core values, beliefs, and 21st Century Learning Expectations with all constituencies which incorporates current research on 21st Century Learning Expectations, multiple data sources , as well as district and school priorities
4. Develop and implement a process to ensure the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st Century Learning Expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school, drive curriculum, instruction , and assessment in every classroom, and guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations

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Curriculum

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

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

CONCLUSIONS

Because of the extensive opportunities provided in most courses for all of the 21st century learning academic expectations, students have opportunities to achieve all four of the academic learning expectations. A review of representative work across grade levels demonstrates an opportunity for students to evaluate and implement solutions, to communicate effectively in written, oral and visual forms, to demonstrate appropriate use and application of media/technology, and to access, comprehend, analyze and interpret information. Each department has two primary academic 21st century expectations for which they are responsible, and each department addresses the other indicators on a secondary level.

The 21st century Social Expectation #1 rubric can be assessed in the academic classroom while Social Expectation #2 ties into community service and engagement in co-curricular and community activities. While the 21st Century Learning Expectations in the academic areas have been addressed, the Social #2 and Civic #1 have yet to be put in place in the school. Discussions have taken place on how to assess and report these results, but plans have yet to be finalized as to when and how this will be accomplished. According to teacher interviews, one person will be responsible for the recording of community service hours to track student participation in the Social #2 learning expectation.

The 21st Century Learning Expectations are identified in the program of studies. There are many instances of multiple courses in multiple curricular areas that offer learning experiences related to each of the school's learning expectations. While the Endicott survey notes that 52 percent of teachers do not believe that the 21st Century Learning Expectations are clearly understood, teacher interviews and a review of the 21st century learning expectation rubrics demonstrate individual teachers are confident in their understanding of them. At this time, there is no plan in place to review data/results regarding the school's learning expectations for use in making decisions to add or delete courses or units from the curriculum. While teachers and administrators who were interviewed believe that a plan will be put in place at some time, there is, as yet, no clear plan of action. The ASPEN grading system is the main technological tool to be used in aligning the 21st Century Learning Expectations with the curriculum. Currently the ASPEN system is not reporting any of the 21st Century Learning Expectations in any of the course descriptions. While the visiting team was assured it was a software error, conversations with staff indicate that the problem has existed since the summer of 2012 and has not yet been rectified. While it is evident through review of student work that school-wide rubrics have recently been put in place to ensure comprehensive and cohesive assessment; however, until the ASPEN system is reporting the 21st Century Learning Expectations, there is no evidence to verify that students have equitable and multiple opportunities to meet the 21st Century Learning Expectations. (self-study, teacher interviews, Endicott survey, student interviews, student work, and ASPEN artifact)

A common curriculum template is in place to record evidence of essential questions, concepts, content, skills, the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations and instructional strategies; however, a significant number of courses have not addressed all areas of the template. The teachers of Amesbury High School have attempted to revise their curricula in a common format using the Aspen system. This system will allow teachers to access, update, and improve their curriculum on an ongoing basis. The leadership of Amesbury High School implemented a new curriculum format that includes a Backward Design template to record essential questions, essential understandings, essential skills, growth activities, instructional strategies, access to print and digital resources, formative assessments and summative assessments that tie into each unit of study. Some of the courses described in the ASPEN Curriculum Guide include data that is not incorporated throughout all courses offered in the program of studies: the Early College American History course aligns its curriculum to both the Common Core and the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework. Teachers reported that at one point all courses did have their courses aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework and Common Core but a computer problem erased that part of the common template for many of the courses. There is limited hard copy evidence that all courses in the ASPEN system follow a common template. For example, College Preparatory Personal Finance, College Preparatory Advanced Study of Art, College Preparatory Advanced Acting, College Preparatory Architectural Drafting and Design, and College Preparatory Trigonometry, among other courses, do not have evidence recorded on the template. The curriculum guides in ASPEN do not include the school's applicable 21st Century Learning Expectations while Amesbury High School's hard copy of the course catalog does include the 21st Century Learning

Expectations, but does not include essential questions, concepts, content, skills, instructional practices and assessment practices.

In the spring of 2012, Amesbury High School developed and adopted a set of school-wide rubrics for the 21st Century Learning Expectations. Each department takes primary responsibility for two expectations and secondary responsibility for additional expectations. Teachers have begun to incorporate these rubrics into their curriculum; however, there is a lack of available common rubrics within departments and across the curriculum to address assignments that have a common theme. Each teacher creates assignment-specific rubrics which, for the most part, are not shared across departments. For example, in the grade 9/10 cohort inclusive, English class students were assigned to write a character analysis for *The Hunger Games*. The assignment-specific rubric was used rather than the 21st Century Learning Rubric. In an Environmental Science course that covers grades 10,11,12, the Species Project has both a project-specific rubric accompanied by a 21st century learning rubric. In an Early College II course for grade 11, an assignment to use descriptive imagery and figurative language to write a short story was not accompanied by any rubric. It is clear that certain departments, such as English and history, use common rubrics for assessments while others do not. Amesbury High School's understanding and use of department-wide rubrics and school-wide rubrics is emerging throughout the curriculum. When there is a clear delineation of the components for the common curriculum identified in the Aspen system and a process for ensuring all curriculum is entered, then the school will have a framework for delivery of 21st Century Learning Expectations. (self-study, teacher interviews, student interviews, student work, and Aspen artifact)

Amesbury High School frequently 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 the school, and informed and ethical use of technology. Some classes intentionally integrate and align with other disciplines to deepen academic application and student performance. Examples of this appear in an anatomy and physiology unit developed in collaboration with physical education that explores exercise physiology; as well as a Geology class and a Local Connections class having an integrated unit of study that explores the geologic history of the Merrimack Valley. The development of an American Studies program synthesizes American literature and American history. In grades 9, 10, and 11, the English language arts program and the world language department work collaboratively to demonstrate similar grammar principles that apply regardless of the language being taught. The Senior Research project is a cross-disciplinary learning opportunity that allows students to select research topics from a variety of academic and practical disciplines. Certain classes in the curriculum allow for authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school. Entrepreneurship courses allow students to develop their own business while the American Studies class visits Boston's Freedom Trail and the mayor's office in Amesbury Town Hall. Lowell's Boat Shop and the Local Connections class partners with the mathematics department to encourage authentic learning experiences. The "Baby Think it Over" program offered in Child Development class allows students to bring home a computerized infant that emotes like an infant and places the student in a real world situation. Big Brother/Big Sister allows students the opportunity to explore the real world and to expose students to prospective careers. The management and creation of the yearbook, a one-semester course, allows direct student involvement in editorial, management and production of the yearbook. This can also be seen in the AHS Weekly and the student newspaper. Tapestry, the school's literary magazine, is student driven and run. The in-house production of this magazine uses the Mac computer labs, and students invest a great deal of time and effort to create this document. The Early College Program allows sophomores, juniors, and seniors the opportunity to enter a program that exposes students to the rigor of college. In the sophomore and junior year, an American Literature course taught by an Amesbury High School teacher and an American History course taught by a

Northern Essex Community College professor, is team taught. The aforementioned programs offered by Amesbury High School allow students exposure to real world situations and higher order thinking skills. A course for grades 9 through 12, taught by the school librarian, allows students to learn about the school guidelines regarding responsible and ethical use of the Internet. To further insure ethical use of technology, parents and students sign an acceptable use policy at the beginning of the school year. While inquiry, problem-solving and higher order thinking are visible in classes, academic challenge is not consistent among classes and departments at Amesbury High School. In many instances, as shown by student work, higher order thinking and inquiry were not evident in the assignments. As the curriculum is reviewed and revised, the opportunities for an emphasis on depth of understanding, application of inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking will ensure all student opportunities to achieve the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations. (class observation, student work samples, self-study, and evidence of teacher assignments)

There is limited evidence of clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum. No formalized plan is in place for lesson plans to be collected and reviewed by administration in order to ensure that teachers are teaching the curriculum outlined in the documents. According to the self-study, formal classroom visits, informal classroom visits, and learning walks are used to corroborate that the curriculum taught is aligned with the written curriculum; however, there was no evidence found that demonstrated examples of this practice. When the school implements a clear process to demonstrate alignment between the written and taught curriculum, it will ensure that the written curriculum is being used as the foundation for classroom learning. (Self-study, teacher interviews, and classroom observations)

There is limited evidence of curricular coordination and vertical articulation between and among all academic areas within the school, as well as with sending schools in the district. The school/district does not have a clearly identified curriculum review cycle. There is minimal formal time devoted to the development of curriculum and there is not a formal plan in place for the review and evaluation of the curriculum. Faculty members spend limited time in collaborative activities. Critical Friends Groups and Teacher Leader do allow some teachers the opportunity to collaborate. There is evidence of some vertical alignment between content areas, as Subject Area Committees were recently formed. While elementary principals report that discussions are held with sending schools for the purpose of student preparatory, there is little time spent in the vertical alignment of curriculum. Faculty members report that they refer to Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and Common Core curriculum guides for math and ELA in order to develop curriculum; however, most departments do not have completed curriculum maps or guides available for viewing, reviewing, or evaluating curriculum on the ASPEN student information system. Therefore, the school-generated curriculum guides utilized are not sufficiently complete to demonstrate effective coordination and articulation of all content areas, thereby ensuring all students have access to the school's applicable 21st Century Learning Expectations. (self-study, teacher interviews, and school leadership committee)

Overall, it is evident that staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, and supplies are inadequate to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities offered by the school. This is attributed to attrition of faculty members. As a result, class sizes have increased and the timeliness of offering elective classes has been impacted. For example, the band director/teacher works at both the middle and high school, impacting the time band class can be offered. As a result of having fewer faculty members available to teach electives regularly, these class offerings must be staggered (offered only every other year, semester or quarter) or faculty members, such as the art teacher, must offer multiple levels of instruction during one period. For example, AP Art, Advanced Studio Art and Drawing and Painting are all run concurrently, resulting in classes that

contained over thirty students. This attrition along with the reallocation of those staffing funds impacts the integrity of the instruction offered and places a weighty responsibility on the teacher to manage large classes safely and effectively. The reduction in workforce also limits scheduling options for students wishing to take certain electives because teachers are not available to teach these electives more frequently. The evidence indicates that students and teachers do not have sufficient instructional materials to fully implement the curriculum. According to the self-study, teachers engage in creative grant writing in order to purchase instructional materials they feel will benefit their programs. Students have had to incur additional financial responsibilities for co-curricular programs such as the Early College program and other learning opportunities. The school's technology is not sufficient to fully implement the curriculum. For example, Wireless Internet access is limited, and there are limited laptops available to classroom teachers. There are not enough labs to adequately support classes which would benefit from dedicated labs, such as world language and music. Regular education classrooms are currently equipped with only two computers, one for the teacher, and one available for student use with the exception of science and technology-based courses. The school's equipment and supplies are also observed to not be adequate to fully implement the curriculum. According to the self-study, administration has consistently chosen to keep staff in lieu of replacing or adding equipment and supplies. Therefore, a real need exists in all departments for supplies, technology, and equipment to enhance the delivery of curriculum. The infrastructure does not adequately provide the resources necessary to fully implement the curriculum. For example, wireless access is only available in the library, main office, and central office areas. This limited internet access significantly impacts the level of learning that can take place in a classroom and time spent on learning. Budgetary constraints have also resulted in having the bare minimum of library/media resources necessary to fully implement the curriculum. The library/media specialist reports that the annual budget has been continually reduced over the past decade. The current budget, including audio visual, supplies and books is fifteen percent of the 2002 budget. There is also a negative impact due to the limited funding available to support co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities such as sports and clubs. User fees have been instituted for sports, and clubs must fundraise for essential club activities. When the school provides adequate staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, and supplies to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities offered by the school, then all students will have equitable opportunities to achieve the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations. (self-study, facility tour, teacher interviews, classroom observations, student shadowing, and observations)

The school provides the school's professional staff with limited personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research. The Director of Assessment and Accountability is responsible for district and school-level curriculum coordination and articulation. This position is newly created. The professional staff has adequate time provided to devote to curriculum coordination and articulation, and seven Teacher Leader positions have been created. Prior to the establishment of Teacher Leaders, which are non-compensated and non-administrative positions, there were department head positions that were compensated. These positions provided an opportunity for the collaborative discussion of curriculum. However the constant change of the instructional leadership model in the district has continued to erode the full and effective implementation of the curriculum. Members of the professional staff are actively involved in the process of ongoing curriculum development. There is no plan in place, however, for the timely review of curriculum. The school/district does not have a regular curriculum review cycle. Over the past three years, the school has invested in a number of expenditures to improve curriculum development, including release time for faculty members, stipends for those teachers who rewrote curriculum over the summer of 2012, and has created the positions of Teacher Leader to improve curriculum in lieu of the traditional department chair. The district supports the use of the ASPEN student

information management software for curriculum mapping. The school has offered a workshop “What the New CCSS/MA Curriculum Standards Mean for the Amesbury Public Schools” for the development, evaluation and revision of curriculum. There is no evidence to support that the school uses data/results collected from assessment of the school’s learning expectations to make revisions to the curriculum. There are, however, examples of innovative thinking and practices related to curriculum. Teachers frequently request innovation grants from the Amesbury Educational Foundation to support new and novel approaches to learning in the classroom. For example, the physics teacher was awarded “Nature Speaks” grants in two consecutive years to fund the purchase of graphical analysis (Logger Pro) software to enhance classroom learning. The school is in their nascent stage in providing 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. With further development and attention, the professional staff will have opportunities to collaborate and revise their curriculum. (teacher interviews, school leadership committee, and observations)

COMMENDATIONS:

1. The adoption of a common template for curriculum reporting
2. The faculty members for attention to curricular development without having fully articulated direction and consistent leadership in place
3. The faculty members for developing sound curricular offerings with a minimum of resources to support their efforts
4. The administration for being attentive to the social, civic and academic needs of the school population by making courses such as Child Development/Baby Care, CPR Training, and art graduation requirements for all students
5. The extensive opportunities provided to students for authentic learning both in and out of the school

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Prioritize the implementation and reliable operation of the Aspen portal
2. Establish a system to ensure that all units of study include 21st Century Learning Expectations, as well as essential questions, concepts, content, skills, instructional strategies and assessment practices that include school-wide rubrics are accessible on the ASPEN student information portal to all constituents
3. Implement processes to ensure that the curriculum provides opportunities for students to achieve high order thinking, inquiry and problem-solving skills in an academically challenging environment
4. Develop and implement a process to ensure clear alignment between the written and the taught curriculum
5. Develop and implement a system to provide effective curricular coordination and the vertical alignment between and among all academic areas within the school as well as sending schools in the district
6. Develop a formalized the curriculum review cycle to provide for the regular review, evaluation and revision of curriculum
7. Establish a formal hierarchy of responsibility for curricular development and oversight
8. Ensure the timeliness and availability of course offerings to students
9. Allocate appropriate resources to ensure that the adequate levels of staffing, instructional materials, technology, equipment and supplies are available to support classroom instruction and the delivery of the curriculum
10. Utilize data from assessments and current research to develop, evaluate, and revise curriculum

3

Instruction

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

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

CONCLUSIONS

Teachers' instructional practices are examined to ensure consistency with Amesbury High School's core values, beliefs, and 21st Century Learning Expectations in some areas, but integration and application is sporadic. Teachers have multiple ways to examine their practices. The Critical Friends Groups are composed of faculty members who meet every first and third Tuesday to discuss student work, issues in their current practice, and reflect on topics about teaching and assessment. Other Tuesdays are reserved for department meetings and for checking in with other groups and the principal. The TLA (Teaching and Learning Alliance) is a professional development program implemented at Amesbury High School which pulls from current research in order to improve teachers' instructional practices. Multi-department groups of teachers each year open up classrooms to colleagues for informal observation of instructional

practices, such as the gradual release of responsibility from teacher to student. Many teachers are familiar with the school's identified beliefs about learning and connect their lessons and instruction to 21st Century Learning Expectations. The expectations include the requirements for students effectively communicating orally and through writing and visuals, crafting problem-solving-based inquiry lessons, and working both independently and within groups. Students in art classes are encouraged to disseminate their work out into the community and many students have submitted their work to various art contests. However, the integration of 21st Century Learning Expectations by teachers is inconsistent, as only 13.5 percent of faculty members reported that the school has adopted school-wide analytic rubrics that define all the 21st Century Learning Expectations standards and fewer than 50 percent of staff members reports that teachers continuously examine their instructional practices to ensure consistency with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. Teachers report that more formal professional development time is necessary in order to review and discuss best practices.. Rigor and formality within instruction and student expectations is an area for growth, as less than 36.5 percent of faculty members report that AHS's 21st Century Learning Expectations are challenging and measurable. Student work supported this conclusion. As the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations are more fully integrated into instructional practices, consistency of their application will improve. (classroom observation, student work, Endicott survey, student shadowing, and teacher interviews)

Teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations in varying degrees. Students are often encouraged to connect their learning to personal experiences. They often personalize their studies. The art teacher frequently allows students to work on submissions to art contests, as an alternative, which provides authenticity to a classroom assignment. The contest provides practice for submitting work to authentic audiences outside the classroom. For the AP Art class, the work is individualized and submitted to the College Board for assessment. In this case, teacher feedback is in the form of oral suggestions the majority of the time. A history class allows for individual choice on an Industrial Revolution project. An English class allows students to choose from five independent reading texts of various genres, formats, and difficulty. An epic poem project encourages students to integrate visual art, original music, writing, and technology into a summative assessment. In some areas, teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations by incorporating differentiated instruction, personal choice, incorporation of technology and strategic course planning. Teachers are often available to meet individually or in small groups to re-teach, remediate, or address a student's unique learning needs, as evidenced by A Block, student interviews, and faculty member feedback. Some classes rely on differentiating instruction, although some students report that consistent direct-instruction and lecture-style instruction are the most common format in their classes. Often, teachers offer a range of study topics or assessment opportunities within their curriculum and unit plans, and 74.3 percent of students report that teachers give opportunities to choose topics for some assignment. Student choice within a teacher-designed assessment is evident, but students building their own inquiry-based projects and independent studies are less common. A major senior English assessment synthesizes AHS teachers' gradual-release instruction through a ten-week, scaffold guided independent research project that culminates in a presentation delivered to an authentic audience of classmates, parents, and community members. Some math classes are student centered as evidenced by various interviews; students become experts on a piece of the math curriculum and then plan and deliver a lesson with an assessment to other students. Personalization, though, depends on availability of faculty members. The overwhelming majority of faculty members provide evidence that an imbalance in student class sizes challenges sufficient personalization in instruction. The Learning Center, for example, a space for students with diagnoses ranging from obsessive compulsive disorder, neurological deficiencies, autism, emotional and behavioral challenges, is designed to offer focused personalization, but there is often one instructor in an 87-minute class with fourteen such students. Other class sizes have increased, adding to the teacher

difficulty of providing effective personalization. Also, the overwhelming majority of Teacher Leaders expressed problematic class sizes due to the decision not to hire new teachers after others retire. Unanimously, Teacher Leaders reported that department sizes have been significantly reduced as older teachers retire. They report that this affects the consistency of course offerings. Family consumer science faces additional safety hazards with more than thirty students in a hands-on class. Two teachers report that student interest in family consumer science warrants up to two more full-time consumer science faculty members. The theater and musical arts also face new challenges as the band teacher works in another school in the district. (classroom observation, student work, Endicott survey, student shadowing, and teacher interviews)

Although interdisciplinary studies occur, there are limited examples. Students in a theater class craft crime-scene skits for students in forensic sciences, and students in manufacturing or constructing technologies design sets for the drama club. Also, a history teacher sometimes meets with an art teacher to plan a visit to the art room for an art history project. In addition, AHS offers an American Studies course which is co-taught by a history and an English teacher, and an Early College program for sophomores and juniors is co-taught by a college and high school instructor. A new program beginning in 2012-2013 includes a two-year grant allowing Advanced Math classes to partner with Lowell's Boat Shop. This partnership provides an opportunity for students to combine marine studies on the Merrimac River with authentic math tasks. Students use measuring tapes, stopwatches, sextants, and other tools to collect data and apply trigonometry to nautical experiences. Journal reflections, some assessed with the school-wide writing rubric, are a part of this unit. Team building, water safety, local history, physical movement, advanced math, and problem solving serve as an exemplar in AHS's move to provide cross-disciplinary studies. More often, teachers bring other disciplines into their own instruction, but rarely do faculty members have the opportunity to design interdisciplinary grade-level curriculum, units, projects, or assessments. Teachers report that they meet informally to work toward a more cross-disciplinary curriculum

Evidence supports that students are frequently engaged in active, self-directed learning. A class observation provides evidence that students work in strategic groups to do hands-on measuring tasks, but students indicate that such group tasks are rare. Science classes often work in groups and English classes promote shared oral and written communication. In other classes, students are charged with using their expertise in one unit to disseminate to other students and to assess their knowledge. In this way, students facilitate their own learning as well as their peers' learning. Students provided evidence that both teachers and other students often act as spontaneous coaches to guide specific understanding gaps. Many classes incorporate consciously planned hands-on, project-based learning and discovery lessons. An English class encourages students to incorporate and prove their understanding through a presentation including music performance, visual products, and oral explanation. Forensics classes root their structure in problem-solving and inquiry-based classes that require students to synthesize prior and new knowledge. Other examples of student work and evidence show that writing lessons and science lessons, through websites and worksheets, are more teacher-lecture and podium style instruction. Frequently, independent research occurs within the parameters of a teacher-defined unit project. according to a teacher, there has been a shift to more student-centered instruction within the decade. (classroom observation, student work, Endicott survey, student shadowing, and teacher interviews)

Teachers' instructional practices, by design, exhibited attempts to support achievement of the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations through emphasizing key themes and concepts, but sporadically in terms of essential questions. The Endicott survey indicates that almost 60 percent of parents who

responded feel that their child's teachers emphasize inquiry, problem-solving and higher order thinking. Frequently, students stated that they had read essential questions on lesson expectations. Many students were unable to recall and recite essential questions when asked, which points to a lack of reinforcement throughout the course. In some areas, teachers emphasized skills that extended beyond the acquisition of knowledge on Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning. Students formally analyzed their learning while others did so on an informal basis. However, in viewing student work, many essential questions contained on the cover sheets showed that the questions required students to respond by acquiring a skill and did not promote "big picture" inquiry and reflection. In honors and AP English, students engage in a year-long research project. This is a requirement for graduation for all seniors. The students' analytical reflection on the completion of this project illustrates critical and meaningful insight into individual learning. Frequently, the use of 3-2-1 graphic organizers to focus student attention were utilized but in-depth reflection was limited. Teachers stated that they have all been trained in gradual release of responsibility for learning from the teacher to the student, but only occasional evidence was observed. Amesbury High School's Self-Study states that "Across all disciplines, teachers are moving from traditional textbook methods of teaching to a more teacher as facilitator model with authentic assessment opportunities." In some classes this was evident, but this shift was inconsistent overall. Teacher Leaders are recognized, but there is need for more definitive roles and responsibilities in this area. Teacher Leaders design department meetings, but are not allotted formal time within the school day to reflect and formally structure consistent protocol for meetings. (classroom observation, student work, Endicott survey, student shadowing, and teacher interviews)

Across the school, teachers frequently ask students to apply knowledge to other experiences or situations, as well as to use skills and opportunities that exist outside of the classroom. A majority of teachers engage students in meaningful projects which lead to formal presentations. Students in the Early College program present character studies and application of the text studied to support characterization. Students in both AP English and Honors English present their research projects in the form of PowerPoint presentations. Opportunities to present student learning through formal presentations were evident across the school, and teachers indicated that parents and other teachers are invited to attend these presentations. Amesbury High School's Self-Study indicated that collaboration exists between the school and Lowell's Boat Shop. This collaboration provides many opportunities for real-life connections of learning in math, history, and science disciplines. Parents expressed a real need for more internship opportunities or job-shadowing for students to extend their learning beyond the classroom and to find real-life applications for their learning. AHS has two strong higher learning collaborations with the Early College program and Northern Essex Community College. (classroom observation, student work, Endicott survey, student shadowing, and teacher interviews, Parent interviews)

Teachers are engaging students in authentic reflection of their work, learning, and understanding, which includes self-critiques, portfolios and rubrics. In so doing, teachers are demonstrating that assessment, evaluation, and analysis are part of the learning process. Twenty-first century learning expectations' language is inconsistent in assessment rubrics. On viewing student work, and visiting classrooms, connecting the self-assessments reflections to 21st Century Learning Expectations was evidenced in some areas.

Although some evidence of self-assessment reflection is observable when viewing student work, and visiting classrooms, the academic intent of this is limited. It was noted that other forms of self-assessment or reflection exist in other classes informally. An informal class discussion, or a 3-2-1 graphic organizer after reading selections, was used to reflect upon learning. In at least one class it was

observed that this 3-2-1 organizer was further utilized in a “think-pair-share” activity to disclose learning with a partner. The Endicott survey stated that students felt teachers provide them with opportunities to evaluate and assess their work. (student work, Endicott survey, student shadowing, and teacher interviews)

Across the school, teachers embraced and utilized available technology to enhance their instruction. The use of document cameras was prevalent in classrooms, along with LCD projectors and computers. Many teachers utilized this technology to illustrate and enhance their instruction. Students were receptive, comfortable, and engaged in receiving their instruction when technology was utilized. There are very few SMART Boards available for classrooms. Student work provided many examples of PowerPoint presentations and occasional video production project presentations. Other technology was evident in student work such as typed work using a word processing program and photography produced digitally. AHS has three computer labs, two PC labs and one Mac lab. Two of these labs, one Mac and one PC, are classrooms that are slated for use by digital photography and video production classes, and therefore provide limited availability for other classes to use. The self-study indicated that scheduling of the computer labs is “challenging” and little evidence was observed that students utilized either lab to complete work. Students and faculty members can use laptop carts when visiting the library. It is unclear why scheduling of either lab has been an issue. Members of the faculty would like to see the campus of AHS fully Wi-Fi accessible in order to utilize personal computing devices, as noted in the self-study. In the area of technology it was observed that a number of students were using their cell phones in the halls, at lunch, and in the library, and one student divulged that cell phones can be used when researching or for information related to a class assignment. With the Endicott survey indicating that almost 77 percent of students say that teachers require them to utilize technology in assignments, the opportunity to use that technology at school is limited. (classroom observation, student work, student shadowing, and teacher interviews)

Teachers frequently adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by using formative assessment, purposefully organizing group activities, and providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom, but differentiated instruction is less frequent. Students were frequently asked to understand the components of their learning by sharing their understanding with a group or partner, and then reporting out to the whole class. In this way, teachers were able to provide formative assessment during instruction to gauge student learning. Instruction was adjusted and guided by student understanding as evidenced by student shadowing and classroom walk-throughs. Teachers’ feedback during the class period was evident, although feedback was less consistent through ASPEN. Teacher feedback was immediate, specific and purposeful to provide assistance to the student as well as to provide validation. Only 36.5 percent of parents indicated on the Endicott survey, that teachers modify or adjust their instructional practices based on student progress in achieving the school’s learning expectations. Students indicate that some teachers are available after school in addition to the A Block morning period. Teachers are also available at the beginning or end of class for clarification of learning and for questions. Students feel that teachers are more than willing to give them help, or allow a redo of an assignment to cement learning. Students are comfortable seeking out a teacher for extra help, and teachers make themselves available regularly.

The vast majority of faculty members at AHS purposefully organize learning activities requiring students to form groups. Collaboration is evident in student projects, 3-2-1 graphic organizer activities, completing assignments, organizing presentations in many classes, and students working in pairs or in small groups. In a co-taught American Studies class in which students are receiving instruction in an

integrated course of both English and history concurrently, students were given the opportunity to read a non-fiction selection, and complete a 3-2-1 graphic organizer to flesh out their understanding together. Each pair shared their learning with each other and discussed the content. It was further observed that, in a Personal Finance class, the teacher provided direct instruction on elements of filing a tax return. Students were then asked to gather in groups to work on the elements of completing the form, and to discuss their fictitious scenarios of earnings and taxes paid. Student work demonstrates strong evidence of peer collaboration and group activities in the majority of classes. (classroom observation, student work, Endicott survey, student shadowing, and teacher interviews)

The vast majority of students and teachers reported that teachers provide additional support during the A Block period in the morning, after school, and before and after class. The A Block period is 27 minutes going beyond time-on-learning each morning, utilized for extra help, among other activities. Teachers, parents, and school administrators indicated that this period is also utilized for band and chorus practice, IEP and 504 meetings, and parent meetings. This brief amount of time is utilized for a large number of activities which may conflict and reduce teacher availability for students. The self-study indicated that, "Teachers surveyed report working with students one-on-one for an average of three-to-five hours outside of regular school hours weekly." This time exceeds the A Block period. One teacher also reports that many teachers in the school are coaches and are not be available for extra help after school. There is conflicting evidence about the amount of available time students have to seek extra help from teachers. When differentiated instruction meets the same level of frequency as of teachers adjusting their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by using formative assessment, purposefully organizing group activities, and providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom students will have increased opportunity to meet the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations. (classroom observation, student work, Endicott survey, student shadowing, and teacher interviews)

Evidence supports that a majority of teachers, individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices by using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments, occasionally by examining student work. Teachers employ a variety of assessments which include frequent quizzes, 3-2-1's, John Collins Program directed writing pieces, Focus Correction Areas, journal entries, direct questioning and redirecting, coaching, and leading group work. Evidence of Scantron data analysis and excel spreadsheets of students' performance support teacher investment in data collection. Teachers report that they use this data to augment, adjust, and develop instruction. Inconsistent evidence shows a disconnection between data collection and use of the data to respond to the needs of struggling students. All teachers build summative assessments into their chapter, unit, quarter, and semester plans. Final exams across the school are examined by teachers instructing the same courses to ensure continuity of summative assessments. The discussions around student assessment is sometimes formally built into professional development time, but teachers expressed the need for more formal time to collectively examine student work and to formally meet with department Teachers Leaders to build, adjust, and develop a formal procedure to implement common rubrics, units, and best instructional practices. Teachers report that instruction reflection, research study and review is often individual

Teachers occasionally meet by design to formally review, discuss, and implement protocols of reviewing student work and use feedback from a variety of sources to improve instruction. Teachers' formal meetings within and especially across departments is limited because professional development time is used for defining and developing curriculum and classroom activities versus moving forward

with 21st Century Learning Expectations. Previous department heads provided plans and direction for professional development, but the leadership model change is in flux. This change has affected the professional development for new protocols and research regarding the study of student work to adjust instruction. Individual teachers across the school implement 21st Century Learning Expectations by showing other students exemplar models of student work. Teachers report that AHS administration is invested in current research and instructional strategies because administrators often visit small group professional development work and support teacher professional development ambitions. Administrators frequently inform staff members about professional development opportunities. The district builds a pool of funds for faculty members' professional development, but these funds are finite and operate on a first-come-first-serve basis. One teacher reports that, although every one of his professional development opportunities has not been district funded, he has never been denied the opportunity for professional development by administration. Almost all teachers report that they do not have adequate formal time to discuss current research and best practices related to instruction. Most of the adjustment and conversations about instructions are informal and done on the teachers' own time, although stipends were allotted for summer work on curriculum and instruction development. Through TLA, A Block, principal support of professional development and administrative teacher pre-observation and post-observation meetings, school leaders demonstrate that professional discourse contributes to improvement in instruction. When the level of practice used to improve teacher instruction becomes complete and unified, it will be more responsive to student needs. (classroom observation, Endicott survey, student shadowing, and teacher interviews)

Teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. At AHS teachers report that they are involved in summer professional development seminars or projects, and are taking graduate courses on an ongoing basis; they indicate that they regularly reflect upon their practices with feedback from colleagues, students and administration. Limited evidence was seen of current teacher portfolios of their practice in order to provide evidence for recertification and for the new Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Teacher Evaluation requirements. Despite several direct questions pertaining to whether teachers engaged in reading current literature concerning content-specific instruction practices, there was no definite response about journals or pedagogical magazines. Some teachers stated that the occasional article might appear in their mailbox deposited there by another staff member. Teachers identified as Team Leaders/Subject Area Coordinators reported that administration has never denied access to professional conferences, seminars, or summer programs, but that a creative measure needs to be put into place for payment. Faculty members indicated that if they were to fund the registration fee, then the district would be able to provide funds to cover the individual's substitute teacher for the duration of the conference or seminar. Teachers indicated that a "give and take" situation existed in order to have these kinds of professional development opportunities funded. In addition, teachers reported instructional practices were discussed more informally than formally. AHS has established Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and they meet once a month, but the content of those meetings was not evident. In addition, the school has an organization known as the Teaching and Learning Alliance (TLA). The structure of these two groups was erratic and almost indefinable as indicated by some teachers. A pool of money exists to fund graduate courses for members of the faculty and that, dependent upon the demand for those funds, an individual might be able to have one course a year reimbursed and sometimes two. Funding for professional development courses is in place and operational. (classroom observation, Endicott survey, administrator interviews and teacher interviews)

COMMENDATIONS:

1. The collaboration in the Professional Learning Communities and Teaching and Learning Alliance
2. The individual instruction adjusted in connection with formative and summative assessments as well as with self-evaluation and student feedback
3. The student choice within a teacher-directed assignment
4. The personalization of instruction
5. The responsiveness to student concerns during instructional time
6. The abundant organization of small group and paired learning opportunities
7. The opportunities to apply knowledge to other experiences or situations, as well as to use skills outside of the classroom
8. The availability of faculty members for extra help

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Establish defined roles and responsibilities concerning Team Leaders/Subject Area Coordinators in order to stay current in and disseminate research and best practices
2. Increase opportunities for purposeful reading in professional journals, on current research in pedagogical strategies and content-specific areas, to share with colleagues and to inform instruction
3. Develop and implement processes to ensure teachers strategically differentiate instruction to meet the needs of students
4. Develop and implement a process to ensure all students are engaged in cross-disciplinary learning and instruction that emphasize inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills
5. Provide teachers with formal opportunities to collaboratively meet to examine student work for the purpose of improving instruction
6. Develop and implement a process to gather input from parents, students and other teachers to improve instructional practices

Teaching and Learning Standard

4

Assessment of and for Student Learning

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

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

CONCLUSIONS

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 21st Century Learning Expectations. A significant number of teachers employ rubrics in their classroom instruction, while most teachers use school-wide rubrics on a limited basis. There are some departments, such as the technology department, that are further along than others in implementing school-wide rubrics. The school-wide rubrics have been distributed among the faculty after the formation of a teacher led group of volunteers. Each member of the committee was responsible to author one of the rubrics, which were then edited and brought before the steering committee to be approved. Each department is responsible for two primary 21st Century Learning Expectations and four secondary rubrics. Presently, the school has yet to pilot a program to report the results of the rubrics to students and parents. There is evidence of students engaging in learning activities that directly relate to the 21st Century Learning Expectations. For example, in the mathematics department, students complete homework assignments in which they provide reflections regarding personal experiences with mathematics principals based on the core values of problem solving, analysis and communication. Through discussions with faculty, it is evident that teachers modify and apply the school-wide rubrics to their personal practice, yet a minority of teachers (13.5 percent) express that they use school-wide rubrics on the Endicott survey.

Many of the rubrics observed relate to course-specific standards, with a limited connection to the 21st century learning standards. Additionally, there is a varying amount of support for the usage of the rubrics in classroom practices. Until the school begins to gather and report school-wide rubric results on ASPEN portal, the school will not be able to effectively assess school-wide achievement toward the 21st Century Learning Expectations. The further implementation of ensuring school-wide analytic rubrics are specifically related to the school's learning expectations and employing a formal process to use the school-wide rubrics to assess the whole school and individual student performance in achieving the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations will ensure that all teachers, parents and students have in place a formalized and structured series of instruments that unifies instructional practices and assessment. (teacher interviews, student discussions, collected evidence, and Endicott survey)

The school's professional staff is in the process of developing the link needed to report each student's progress in achieving the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations to students and families and the school's progress in aggregate to the school community. The recent Endicott survey indicates that 56 percent of parents feel that the school provides a formal written report that explains their student's progress in achieving school-wide learning expectations. At present, results from all assessments are reported out through Aspen, the school's student management information system, including progress reports, quarter grades, midterm/final grades and other classroom-specific assignments. Teachers are required to operate a webpage connected through Aspen. Teachers regularly update and maintain their webpages at various levels. Much of the communication regarding the school's achievements toward 21st Century Learning Expectations takes form in the principal's newsletter, a monthly publication that shares achievements and information throughout the school's academic and extra-curricular departments. There have been discussions with the district's Director of Assessment and Accountability, which indicate that the school's goal is to have performance on 21st Century Learning Expectations and school-wide rubrics in place for the upcoming year. The linking of student progress toward achieving the school's learning expectations to the ASPEN portal will assist in improving the communication among students, teachers, parents and administrators regarding instructional delivery and student performance in achieving the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations and facilitate the

ability to communicate the whole school's progress to the community. (self-assessment, panel teacher interviews, observations, and Endicott survey)

The professional staff at Amesbury High School utilizes different strategies to collect, disaggregate, and analyze data in order to respond to inequities in student achievement on a limited basis. Fifty percent of the professional staff collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement, as indicated by the Endicott survey. Teachers use a range of formative and summative assessments to identify the learning inequities in student achievement. With respect to summative assessment, there is evidence of data collection to inform the decision-making process regarding student in the English department, where all freshmen are required to complete a one-hour writing prompt (WAT MCAS simulation) which is incorporated into determining instruction for the future. The assessment was doubled scored by teachers across the various academic disciplines, and results were collected into a formal Excel spreadsheet. In addition, other subject areas, such as freshman biology and math, have teachers gathering together during collaborative time to develop common assessments. At the school level, teachers engage in MCAS result analysis at the beginning of the school year, during designated professional development periods in order to determine weaknesses in performance. At the formative level, teachers engage in a range of assessment practices to analyze student performance and to respond to variances in student achievement. This takes place at the classroom level, in which teachers in the science (biology) and math departments use individual white boards during class to gauge student learning and therefore make adjustments to instructional delivery as needed. Activities range from student-developed work such as "Facebook" pages, posters, journal entries, to less formal "warm-up" writing prompts employed in various English classrooms. Allowing students to demonstrate their knowledge through different forms of assessment gives students multiple opportunities to share their knowledge and improve skill-sets that may otherwise go overlooked. (Endicott survey, classroom observations, evidence boxes, and teacher panel discussions)

Teachers often communicate unit specific learning goals to students prior to each unit of study, but reference to the applicable specific 21st Century Learning Expectations is much less apparent. A majority (75.7 percent) of students express that their teachers explain the learning expectations before each unit of study, while half (50 percent) of the teachers report that they communicate learning expectations and the corresponding rubrics. Just over half (51.1 percent) of parents feel that teachers communicate the learning expectations prior to each unit of study. The 21st Century Learning Expectations are posted on the walls of each classroom. Likewise, a limited number of unit-specific goals and essential questions are found on the curriculum maps available in the ASPEN portal. The 21st Century Learning Expectations are not provided on the ASPEN portal. The standard evidence collected by teachers for the NEASC review and samples collected through observations indicate a consistent usage of essential questions in the development of curriculum and the distribution of classwork on an individual teacher basis. For example, in an English/US History American Studies class, as well as in Holocaust Studies, Leadership, Local Connections, and AP US History, the essential questions for each unit of study are provided to the students. This exercise is conducted throughout a number of other classrooms, such as Forensic Science and Algebra I. Many teachers place essential questions in their course syllabi, while others place essential questions into individual assignments and activities. There are many pieces of evidence that suggest that the foundation to create, develop and share 21st Century Learning Expectations learning goals is in place. Communication of the specific 21st Century Learning Expectations will ensure all invested constituents that the students are working towards the same academic goals and learning expectations. (Endicott survey, evidence boxes, and classroom observations)

There is evidence that a majority of teachers use some type of rubric during some units and most student projects, however, the use of official school-wide rubrics, which were adopted in April 2012, is limited. A minority of teachers is using the school-wide rubrics “as-is.” Much of the evidence provided contained teacher-developed rubrics that were unlike the school-wide rubrics. However, some of these, but not all, were assignments that predated the release of the school-wide rubrics. A number of teachers are also using variations of the school-wide rubrics that they’ve modified for their subject or specific assignment. These modifications include everything from pruning, hybridizing, embedding, and adding to the original rubric. In a few of these samples, the changes increased the academic challenge of the original. Amesbury High School has plans to include the reporting of individual student achievement of 21st Century Learning Expectations starting with the 2013-14 school year. When students are informed of both the course specific and the 21st Century Learning Expectations prior to assessments, then they will be better able to achieve the identified expectations. (evidence files of student work, evidence files of teacher assignments, teacher interviews, student interviews, and Endicott Survey)

The faculty members implement a wide range of formative and summative assessment strategies. Teachers assess students through individual assignment grades, formal written quizzes and tests, mid-quarter reports, quarterly grades and midterm grades. Observations of classrooms, such as the American Studies Honrs 1, have students complete an extensive research paper, complete with source cards, instruction on MLA format, and bibliography, which are collected as smaller grades leading up to a larger assessment evaluation. The social studies department teachers employ John Collins Type III writing assignments as a vehicle for students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of free speech and wartime diplomacy, as well as by examining the role of state government in local history. Teachers in the math department use computer software and hand-held units for students to demonstrate their knowledge of both mathematical principles and proper application of technology. In other departments, for example, the physical education department uses KWL (Know, Want to Know, Learned) charts that asks students to evaluate and implement the FITT Principle for muscle strength. (classroom observation, student work, student shadowing, and teacher interviews)

In addition to formative assessments, the teachers at Amesbury High School use a wide range of summative assignments to gauge student learning. The science department (biology) uses summative assessment in which the unit test consists of a series of applications requiring students to create models to predict outcomes of various ecosystems. Other examples include assessments in the English department (AP Literature), in which students are asked to demonstrate their knowledge in a series of journal writings, seminar discussions and timed essay prompts. Likewise, in the social studies department (AP U.S. History), students create travel brochures about early American colonies, which are graded as a group-project test grade. Evidence collected shows that such summative assessments are also present at the under classmen (grade 9 and 10) levels. In the math department (geometry), students are asked to show subject/skill mastery of Euclidean geometry through “Taxi Cab Geometry.” In the English department, sophomores are asked to discuss social issues through analytical research in the form of both a paper and class presentation. A curriculum that uses a range of formative and summative assessments ensures that all student learning abilities and levels are reached in a number of different forms. (Evidence boxes, classroom observations, and teacher panel discussion)

Teachers work through both formal and informal collaboration on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments. From a school-wide level, the central point of evidence of school-wide formal creation, analysis and revision occurs at the beginning of the school year with building and district leadership regarding student performance on MCAS testing. In addition to the MCAS review at the onset of each school year, teachers participate in a series of

Learning Walks, in which a group of educators across the various disciplines spend 10 to 15 minutes observing the classroom practices of various teachers throughout the building. Teacher discussions indicate that a limited number of teachers participate in the Learning Walks. Additionally, throughout the year, there is evidence of less formal collaboration within the school and among departments. In the social studies department, teachers look at student work in order to prepare their lessons for future classroom activities. Likewise, there is congruency regarding collaboration of formative and summative assessments in the English department, which uses Writing Assessment Team (WAT) assessments, in which students complete a simulated MCAS writing assessment. Student performance is evaluated for preparatory and remediation. The science department (freshman biology) use MCAS questions to formulate a summative exam. The staff participates in examining MCAS results in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in student understanding of content. Additionally, the honors biology teachers found a weakness in organic molecules exposed by poor MCAS results. The math department uses MCAS type questions to measure the understanding and skills of students. Discussions with teachers throughout the visit have revealed concerns among faculty, centrally focused on the lack of time to devote to such collaborative exploration. This finding is supported by evidence grounded in the Endicott survey, in which a slight majority of teachers (61.5 percent) express that they meet formally to discuss formative and assessment strategies. While there is evidence of teachers who engage in collaboration within smaller groupings, when they have formal time that involves all department members it ensures that ideas are shared, best practices are divulged and professional discussion includes all points of view. (Endicott survey, evidence boxes, and teacher panel discussions)

Teachers provide corrective feedback to ensure students review and improve their work within the daily demands of the classroom during the school day, but feedback is sometimes delivered in a less than timely manner. Feedback from teachers takes place for both written work and non-written work. There is evidence that teachers provide instruction to students through peer-editing exercises, in which teachers provide peer-editing sheets for students to review their classmates' work, as seen in English/History American Studies. In Entrepreneurship (grades 9 through 12), students are required to provide their notes to the teacher, which are evaluated using teacher-created rubrics. In grade 9 English classes, students are asked to give answers to reflection questions on *The Odyssey* on Google Drive; the teacher then submits online feedback in the form of follow-up questions and comment for students to review. Self-assessment takes place throughout the span of a student's educational experience at the school. For example, freshmen engage in self-reflection and goal setting regarding their personal educational goals at the conclusion of the first term. The evidence collected only indicates that teachers perform this action on an individual basis and there are no department-wide policies that guide this activity. Similarly, as student's progress through the school, the English department asks seniors as part of their graduation requirement to complete a research project in which they write a formal, typed essay that asks the student to reflect on their personal growth throughout the research process.

Concurrently, there is limited evidence that suggests that feedback takes place in a timely and formal manner for parents, students and professional staff to view grades. Discussion with administrators indicated that there is limited oversight and monitoring of the frequency and timeliness of grades posted to Aspen. Conversations with parents in panel discussions and the Endicott survey reflect this sentiment, as 55.5 percent of respondent's report that the teachers provide timely and corrective feedback to assist their child in revising and improving assignments. As the school moves forward to ensure timely feedback on student performance, student learning will improve. (self-study, Endicott survey, teachers discussion, and student discussion)

A significant majority of teachers at Amesbury High School are committed to using formative assessments to evaluate student progress. The teachers frequently use formative assessment to gather data and adapt their instructional strategies long-term in order to improve student learning. There is ample evidence of this, such as the use of John Collins Type I writing in most departments, document cameras for peer assessment in a large majority of classrooms, individual student white boards used in approximately half of classrooms, blog posts by students responding to teacher prompts and the use of “clickers” in a variety of classrooms, using one of three portable clicker sets. During teacher meetings/interviews, many were able to cite examples of instruction that were modified as a result of formative assessment. Efforts made by teachers regarding the incorporation of regular and productive formative assessment are commendable and should continue, as they are representative of best practices in teaching and learning. (classroom observations, student work, teacher assignment, teacher interviews, student interviews).

Teachers and administrators at Amesbury High School, individually and collaboratively, use instructional data to revise curriculum and improve instructional strategies, through both formal and informal processes, although inconsistently across all departments. At Amesbury High School, curriculum mapping is an ongoing process. Beginning in early 2012, all subject areas began the process of revising and mapping curriculum, using the ASPEN portal. Several subject areas are complete or are near completion. The curriculum maps are viewable to the entire learning community, including parents. The curriculum maps include unit topics, key terms, essential questions, essential skills, essential understandings, growth activities, instructional strategies, resources, formative assessments, summative assessments, and content learning standards. The curriculum maps do not contain applicable 21st Century Learning Expectations. Teachers regularly use student work to revise curriculum and instruction, evidenced in multiple ways. Common course and common grade-level assessments, such as the English Writing Assessment Test (WAT) for freshmen and a common MCAS-like math assessment, are used to target students who need remedial help and to revise curriculum. Much of this assessment is done collaboratively across departments. School-wide progress in achieving the school’s 21st Century Learning Expectations is not formally assessed or reported. However, individual student achievements on authentic assessments are examined for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practices. For example, small interdisciplinary teams of teachers, called Critical Friends Groups, meet on a regular basis to review student work and recommend changes to instruction. Administrators and teachers regularly review the results of standardized assessments (MCAS, SAT, SRI, and AP) with the goal of updating curriculum. Data from sending schools, receiving schools, and post-secondary institutions is unavailable to AHS. Survey data is collected from current students (Endicott survey). When formal protocols are put into place to collaboratively examine a wide range of evidence such as student work, common assessments, progress in achieving 21st Century Learning Expectations and data from current students and sending schools, the revision of curriculum and instruction will be ensured. (MCAS item analysis, evidence files, administrator interviews, and teacher panel and interviews)

Teachers at Amesbury High School are in the initial stages of aligning school grading and reporting practices with the school’s core values and beliefs about learning. Teachers are in the process of fully integrating school-wide rubrics, adopted in April 2012, into classroom assignments. Teachers have successfully mastered, without much formal training, the online portal, Aspen, to allow students and parents immediate access to student progress reports and grades. Weighting of grades, such as the Early College Program, were adjusted to better align with the school’s core values and beliefs. Currently, the student’s proficiency in achieving 21st Century Learning Expectations is neither formally recorded nor

reported. AHS has plans to include the reporting of the learning expectations on student report cards during the 2013-14 school year, but there is no official timetable for this process. Each department has taken ownership of two learning expectations. It is unclear at this time how many of these and how frequently they will be reported on. Because the departments have not evenly distributed “primary” and “secondary” ownership of the 21st century learning standards, they are not likely to be reported on evenly. For example, Academic Standard #4 has seven departments taking “primary” ownership, while Social Standard #1 and Civic Standard #1 have no academic department taking ownership. As it stands, these Social and Civic standards are unlikely to be reported on. The alignment of the school’s grading and reporting practices with the school’s core values and beliefs about learning will support the students’ achievement of these goals. (parent meeting, teacher interviews and meetings, student interviews, evidence files, and student handbook)

COMMENDATIONS:

1. The framework for employing a formal process of evaluation, based on school-wide rubrics to assess school and individual progress is in place with individual teachers
2. The teachers’ use of a wide array of formative and summative assessments and the foundation for collecting data to address the inequities in student performance
3. The significant effort to allow students to interact with the curriculum and to display skill acquisition in order to reach numerous learning styles despite large class sizes
4. The initiation of a process to implement 21st Century Learning Expectations and unit-specific goals
5. The teachers’ formal and informal collaboration to discuss and improve formative and summative assessment strategies
6. The initiation of a process for use of instructional strategies and the tools for timely feedback for teachers (ASPEN)
7. The beginning of a formal process of reporting, reviewing and revising, and the significant effort to meet the requirements of the indicator

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Develop a formalized process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess individual student progress in achieving the school’s 21st Century Learning Expectations
2. Implement a formalized system to report individual students’ achievement of the school’s 21st Century Learning Expectations to the student and their families
3. Implement a formalized system to report in aggregate the school’s achievement of the 21st Century Learning Expectations to the community
4. Ensure teachers communicate applicable 21st Century Learning Expectations to students prior to each unit of study and prior to summative assessments
5. Provide formal opportunities for teachers to collaborate on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments
6. Design a plan to ensure educators report feedback in a timely manner on ASPEN
7. Provide formal opportunities to ensure teachers individually and collaboratively examine a wide range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instruction
8. Ensure grading practices are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school’s core values and beliefs about learning

5**School Culture and Leadership**

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

1. The school community consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all.
2. The school is equitable, inclusive, and fosters heterogeneity where every student over the course of the high school experience is enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core course (English/language arts, social studies, math, science, or world languages).
3. There is a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations.
4. In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff:
 - engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning
 - use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices
 - dedicate formal time to implement professional development
 - Apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
5. School leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning.
6. The organization of time supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students.
7. Student load and class size enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students.
8. The principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations.
9. Teachers, students, and parents are involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership.
10. Teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning.
11. The school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations.
12. The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school.

CONCLUSIONS

Amesbury High School fosters a safe, positive, respectful and supportive culture. Students and teachers report a mutually respectful and caring relationship. Many co-curricular activities are offered which appeal to a broad range of students: Drama Club, Student Council, Student Advisory Council, sports teams, Art and Camera Club, Band Activities, Big Brother/Big Sister, Chorus, Connected, Environmental Club, Gay/Straight Alliance, Interact Club, Literary Magazine, Math Team, AHS Weekly Newspaper, Peer Leaders, Recycling Club, and Yearbook. Honor societies include the National Honor Society, Spanish and French Honor Societies, Mu Alpha Theta – Math Honor Society, Rho Kappa National Social Studies Honor Society, Tri-M Music Society, English Honor Society and the Science Honor Society. Amesbury High School has implemented an anti-bully program in compliance with state regulations. Students report that bullying is an unusual occurrence at the school. Students insisted that an additional phrase be added to the core values statement that stressed the importance of respecting individuality. Communication is cited as the key to achieving the supportive environment that AHS enjoys. The student handbook includes academic information, standards, calendars, school resources, student rights and responsibilities, athletics, clubs, co-curricular activities and honor societies, as well as information on technology use, drug and alcohol policies, teen dating violence, and school welfare. The handbook lists system-wide policies regarding health, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Acts (FERPA), transportation, field trips, disabled and special education, and promotion of civil rights. The principal publishes a quarterly newsletter to the school community. Parents state they can subscribe to daily emails from the principal's office outlining upcoming events and important school information. Teachers publish lesson plans and updated student grades on ASPEN, the student information management system, which was actively in use beginning in September 2012. Parents and students access the system to obtain curricular and student information. As a result of the school community's consistent efforts to build a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture, students take responsibility for their learning, share ownership, and exhibit school pride, resulting in a culture that promotes high expectations for all. Establishing this warm and supportive culture at Amesbury High School provides a solid basis for the implementation of plans for the successful delivery of 21st Century Learning Expectations to all students. (panel presentation, teacher interviews, student interviews, parent interviews, student handbook, evidence box, Endicott survey, and self-study)

The school is equitable, inclusive, and fosters heterogeneity where every student over the course of the high school experience is enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core course (English/language arts, social studies, math, science, or world languages). Most courses offer both college preparatory and honors levels. Advanced Preparatory classes are offered in some academic areas and run based on enrollment. All students are required to take one social studies elective which is heterogeneously grouped as a graduation requirement, thus ensuring that all students are enrolled in a heterogeneously grouped core course. Students are required to take additional heterogeneously grouped non-core subjects such as Child Development in order to meet graduation requirements. A significant number of students believe they have various opportunities to take heterogeneously grouped courses. An internal Amesbury High School survey taken in April 2012 asked faculty members if they believe the school culture is "inclusive, equitable and engaging to all members of the school community." A significant number of faculty members answered "always" and a majority answered "sometimes." The AHS graduation requirement that all students take one heterogeneously grouped core course ensures equity and inclusiveness which contributes to a positive respectful school culture. (self-study, Amesbury survey, teacher interviews, and Endicott survey)

Beginning with the 2012 school year, Amesbury High School instituted a formal and ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations. Students began participating in a formal Advisory/Student Mentoring Program in February 2013. At the beginning of the 2012-2103 school year, teachers worked collaboratively to prepare Advisory Program goals and program information outlining the roles and responsibilities of advisors. The program goals center on providing an experience in which students are known by another adult who will advise, support and monitor their academic progress as well as assist in their transition plan to college or a career. The goals for the program include helping students develop the skills to communicate effectively with others, learn to develop self-awareness, and explore and reinforce core values and beliefs on learning that will positively impact the school environment and the Amesbury community as a whole.

A teacher committee prepared a packet of information, including lesson plans containing group activities and guidelines to establish group norms, in anticipation of their roles as advisors. Advisories currently meet twice a month for 30 minutes. Examples of student activities included sophomores completing the COPS Interest Inventory or students creating a paper chain with positive self-affirmations written on each link. Teachers report that although there is a specific activity planned for each grade, they exercise flexibility depending on how students would like to use advisory time. Teachers provide self-reflection about their experiences in advisory. They note that the program will continue to evolve in subsequent years and advisory may meet more frequently.

Based on information provided by teacher interviews and artifacts, the school has instituted a program that allows students to form a relationship with an adult in the school, other than a school counselor, who knows the student well. The Advisory Program is in keeping with the student-centered atmosphere at the school. (teacher interview, student work, self-study, and artifacts)

Teachers improve student learning through professional development and engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning. Teachers 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. Teachers have five half and three full days of scheduled professional development each year. They also meet twice monthly during A Block to engage in "Critical Friends" meetings as a way to engage in professional discourse. These small groups discuss articles shared by the principal, best practices and classroom concerns. Group facilitators meet monthly with the principal to discuss the results of their meetings. Teachers also engage in Learning Walks, a technique learned from the Teaching and Learning Alliance (TLA) in which they visit other teachers' classrooms to observe teaching and to provide opportunities for collegial observations. In order to increase the number of professional development opportunities and balance mandated training with teacher identified needs, the Professional Development Council was formed and met during the 2011- 2012 school year. The Council surveyed faculty members, discussed the findings and identified experts within each building and the district as a whole. New professional development opportunities were created based on teacher needs. Examples of professional development opportunities outside of the school include the Northeast Consortium for Staff Development (NCSD) summer 2012 course offerings, online NCSD classes such as "Navigating Student Support Services" and "Managing Behavioral Challenges on the Classroom." Teachers receive information from such institutions as American International College and Fitchburg State University on upcoming classes. The newsletter "Legal Update for Teachers" is available to teachers. Professional development time has recently been used for curriculum mapping for alignment with Common Core and to learn how to use the recently introduced ASPEN student information system. The Professional Development Calendar for 2011- 2012 lists workshops offered at the high school,

middle school and elementary school for all teachers. Workshops held at the high school include “Bullying and Harassment Annual Training Part 2”, and “What the NEW CCSS/MA Curriculum Standards mean for the Amesbury Public Schools.” Evidence gathered through teacher interviews, notifications of workshops, and professional development calendars indicate that teachers have opportunities to engage in professional development to provide information to improve student learning. (teacher interviews, meeting agenda and minutes, self-study, and professional development school calendar).

School leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning. DESE has mandated a new teacher evaluation system that is research-based. High school administrators have participated in all available DESE required training. All teachers engage in goal setting with new teachers scheduled to be observed four times a year with veteran teachers involved in a rotation between observations and self-directed projects. Administrators have attended a variety of workshops and seminars on the topic of supervision and evaluation, 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 (MSSADA) Athletic Directors Conference 2012, The MSSADA Legal Workshop 2012, and the MSSADA DNA of Leadership Workshop 2012. The school has purchased MyLearningPlan software to document professional development goals, evaluations and professional development activities. Teacher SMART goals were recorded using OASYS software in the 2012-2013 school year. School leaders use a supervision process based upon current research and attend a variety of seminars and workshops to ensure their evaluation and supervision process improves student learning. A continued focus on research-based evaluation and supervision will result in improved teaching and student learning. (DESE website information, teacher interview, meeting agenda and minutes, self-study)

The organization of time frequently supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students. Teachers have formal professional development time allotted to them during the school year. However, teacher interviews indicate they would like to increase the number of hours available for professional collaboration to support the learning needs of all students. At the present time, the thirty-minute A Block is used twice a month for Critical Friends Group. Teachers report they would like to have more time built into the week to meet informally with colleagues to discuss the learning needs of students. Teacher interviews also indicate that lack of a common planning time within particular curricular areas has made it difficult for teachers to collaborate with colleagues to address student needs. When teachers have adequate time to reflect and collaborate with colleagues on the learning needs of all students, it provides a foundation to help students achieve 21st Century Learning Expectations. (teacher interview, student work, self-study, and artifacts)

Teachers indicate that the current student load and class sizes hinder their ability to meet the learning needs of individual students. A roster of classes shows some classes with higher student enrollments ranging from 25 to over 40. A majority of the faculty state class sizes can inhibit the ability to meet the needs of individual students. The number of teachers has decreased from 52 in 2009 to 38 in May 2013. The level-funded budget does not allow for sufficient staff to cover all courses. Reduced staffing has limited students’ opportunities to enjoy a full range of educational offerings and experiences. Students are frequently unable to enroll in courses with scheduling conflicts that either are or cannot be offered in an alternative block, term, or semester due to staffing. Level funding of the school budget over the past several years has significantly impacted the number and quality of 21st century learning opportunities afforded to AHS students. When the school provides adequate and appropriate class size and student

load for teachers then individual student needs can be supported. (self-study, teacher and administrator interviews, program of studies, and student handbook)

Under the current governance model, the principal provides limited instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The principal meets with the leadership team on a bi-weekly basis to discuss policies, procedures and budget. He also attends the Summer Institute for Leadership Workshops annually. The majority of students and a significant number of teachers do not believe that the 21st Century Learning Expectations are clearly understood. While the principal is working closely with others to solidify new initiatives, where these initiatives may ultimately lead the school are unclear to stakeholders. Although there are meeting agendas and minutes, no formal written plans that include timelines have been established for implementing expectations and there is limited evidence of positive outcomes. The lack of funding for teacher leadership positions, increased student enrollment and larger class size is compounded by state and federal mandates, including institution of the Common Core, and creates a leadership challenge. When the principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations, teaching and learning will be improved. (self-study, teacher interviews, and student interviews)

Teachers, students, and parents have several opportunities to be involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership. The administration of AHS is committed to fostering positive and collaborative relationships with parents, teachers and students. A School Council, comprised of teachers, parents, and students, meets monthly to discuss school improvement, budget, operation, instruction and current concerns. The Faculty Advisory Council is an elected board of teachers that discusses school policy and its implementation, and acts as a liaison between teachers and administration. Similarly, Amesbury High School has an active Student Advisory Council and Student Council (STUCO), both of which promote responsibility and leadership. Additionally, parent groups such as the All-Sports Boosters take responsibility for, and ownership of, supporting student activities at AHS. With these committees in place, there is an established system with meaningful and defined roles in the school decision-making process. (teacher interviews, self-study, and evidence box)

Teachers exercise some initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. Teacher interviews indicate the majority of the curriculum development has been a direct result of their initiative under the direction of administrators. Through the TLA, teachers led an initiative for students to create science notebooks to engage them in reflection and self-evaluation. Teachers also advocated for time to participate in Learning Walks in which they are able to observe other teachers' practices, which helps them reflect on their own. Teacher interviews indicate they value this opportunity and subsequent discussions about best practice. As a result of AHS's teacher initiatives and leadership, teachers are expanding their repertoire of best practices as it relates to students' engagement in learning. (teacher interviews, self-study, evidence box)

The school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations. According to administrator interviews, the school committee, superintendent, and principal enjoy a collegial relationship. On the surface, they are collaborative and reflective. However, there is no evidence of constructive action taken to move the school forward in achieving the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations. The last District Strategic Plan was created in 2006 and expired in 2011. The superintendent was given a year of an "Entry" or "Bridge" plan so that she could get to know and understand her new district and determine the key issues at the building, central office, school committee and community levels. The school committee

recently extended this to a second year. The lack of a formal written district strategic plan with benchmarks and timelines for implementation inhibits the ability of students to achieve the AHS 21st Century Learning Expectations. When an actionable and useable District Strategic Plan is developed, it will assist AHS students to move toward achievement of the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations. (administrator interviews, school committee interview, self-study)

The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school. By nature of his position as educational leader of the building in accordance with state law, the principal is empowered to make curricular and instructional decisions. 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. 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 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 committee, principal and superintendent work collaboratively and provide the principal with sufficient decision making authority to lead the school. (interviews with the school committee, administrators, and teachers)

COMMENDATIONS:

1. The supportive, safe, respectful and positive school culture in which students take responsibility for their learning, share ownership and exhibit school pride
2. The inclusion of heterogeneously grouped core courses
3. The comprehensive Advisory Program
4. The implementation of the new teacher evaluation system
5. The staff 's willingness to examine and commit to creative ways to extend teacher availability
6. The staff's commitment to providing the best possible educational opportunities and support to students
7. The cooperative and collaborative relationship among administrators and faculty members
8. The multiple opportunities for meaningful engagement for teachers, students, and parents
9. The teachers' initiative in expanding best practice teaching
10. The collegial relationships among leadership team members

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Review the school's schedule to ensure the organization of time best supports the learning needs of all students, researched based instruction, and professional collaboration among
2. Develop and implement a plan to ensure appropriate class sizes and teacher loads
3. Provide clarity and vision for instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations
4. Increase opportunities for teachers, students, and parents to be involved in meaningful and defined roles in the decision making processes of the school



School Resources for Learning

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

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

7. Support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners, have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
- collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations
 - provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students
 - perform ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

CONCLUSIONS

The school has timely, coordinated and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students that support each student's achievement of the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations. Amesbury High School has an Intervention Team made up of a school psychologist, guidance counselors, school adjustment counselor, job developer, special education teacher, the school nurse, deans, the referring faculty member, and a representative from the Pettengill House, a non-profit social service organization within the community. Any staff member may submit referrals outlining concerns about any student to the Intervention Team. The Intervention Team addresses issues for individual students including learning difficulties, family concerns, behavioral health issues, or medical needs for individual students. Self-study reports and support staff interviews indicate that the Intervention Team meets bi-weekly. Interviews with staff members also indicate that the school psychologist and adjustment counselor cannot attend all meetings because their services are shared with other schools in the district and team members believe that the Intervention Team is limited in its effectiveness because all members cannot attend on a regular basis. Team members are assigned to individual students to gather additional information through student interviews and parent contact. Email conversations among team members propose intervention strategies for student improvement and follow-up activities. Amesbury contracts with Pettengill House, to provide services (basic needs, emergency assistance, prevention education, case management and supports) for students and families. Amesbury also utilizes the Crisis Prevention Intervention Model (CPI) to train individuals in recognizing at-risk students and learning how to de-escalate potentially high-risk situations. The Early College Program is a partnership between Amesbury High School and Northern Essex Community College and an intervention strategy that provides students the opportunity to take high school and college courses in an integrated learning community. Early College is designed for students who have the desire and motivation to attend college through a less rigorous program of study. Freshmen who are interested in the program are identified for eligibility through the SRI Reading Inventory and the Accuplacer. Parents and students agree that the school has timely, coordinated and effective intervention strategies; however, team members believe that the Intervention Team is limited in its effectiveness because all members cannot attend on a regular basis. As a result, students have access to effective interventions that allow them to achieve 21st Century Learning Expectations. (self study, Endicott survey, faculty interviews, and artifacts).

The school effectively 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 to the superintendent's office. The site provides information to students and families regarding services, necessary forms, and teacher assignments. The Amesbury High School Core Values, Beliefs on Learning, 21st 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 information regarding assignments and grades. Staff interviews suggest that, at times, the updating of grades is irregular or inconsistent. The main office at Amesbury High School distributes information to registering students regarding free and reduced lunches, health insurance and bus services. Amesbury High School students and staff promote school events and services through Comcast channels 12 and 18. The school principal hosts “AHS Magazine,” a television show featuring a number of guests who provide information about the district to students and families. The Connect-Ed telephone system is also utilized by Amesbury High School to make important announcements regarding updates and services in the district. Members of administration, guidance, the health office, teachers, and special educators regularly contact families through email or via telephone to address student concerns, student performance, and to facilitate conversations to provide students and families with appropriate and necessary services. 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. A large majority of students report that they know who to ask for help if they have a personal problem. Most parents agree that the school provides information about available student services. Amesbury High School provides an effective means for communicating student support services to families, a prerequisite for all students achieving 21st learning expectations. (self-study, Endicott survey, and faculty member interviews)

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. Aspen is used by guidance counselors for scheduling, locating students, registering students, checking graduation requirements, following student progress, and attendance. Administration and staff use the program to record 504 plans, attendance, grading, legal restrictions, IEPs (active as of 9/1/12) and discipline referrals. The addition of this module places all student and staff information under one information management system. Support services enhancing student learning in the classroom include sound field technology for hearing impaired students and personal FM systems, which allow for inclusion of special education students in the classroom environment; laptop computers, enlarged print texts, “Kurzweil” books for the blind and dyslexic, “Dragon Naturally Speaking,” “Inspiration,” and “Co-writer” software. In addition, the guidance center has four computers available for students to research colleges, write resumes, and complete college applications and financial aid forms and use the Naviance program (available Fall 2013), which assists students in college planning. As a result of the Aspen program, and the ease of access to its centralized student information and the aforementioned technologies, the school provides an effective yet limited range of coordinated programs and services. (self-study, interview with teachers, and classroom visits)

School counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who to varying degrees deliver a written developmental program, meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career and college counseling, deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers, and use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school’s 21st Century Learning Expectations. The guidance counselors are certified and licensed and the student-to-guidance counselor ratio of 240:1 meets the recommended ratio. Counselors meet individually with students to provide personal, academic, career and college counseling throughout the year on a cyclical schedule. Staff interviews indicate that group meetings with students do not take place due to scheduling constraints. One certified school psychologist and one certified adjustment counselor serve 612 students at the high school and 740 students at the middle school. Both work collaboratively with the special education facilitator to ensure that students with individual education plans (19 percent of the population) receive required testing and counseling services. The

adjustment counselor also provides crisis counseling for students within the general student population. One full-time administrative assistant works in the guidance center at the high school. The guidance leader is a certified counselor who serves 130 students, and she is the liaison or administrator for the department, in addition to providing guidance support for the district. Her administrative responsibilities include that of Advanced Preparatory testing coordinator, SAT coordinator for students with learning disabilities (other guidance counselor shares half of this responsibility), scholarship coordinator, maintaining and updating a counselor resource manual, 51A training for staff, and developing a guidance program that works toward congruency with the Massachusetts Model of Guidance. The guidance leader piloted and led the implementation of the Early College Program, a program that has increased academic rigor for the average learner at AHS. The guidance leader participates in a scheduling team, along with the dean of curriculum and the guidance administrative assistant, to create and implement the master schedule for the high school. (self study, administrator interviews, faculty interviews, and artifacts).

While there is no apparent written developmental guidance program, a number of services are provided. 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. (self study, faculty interviews, administrator interviews, and artifacts).

Counselor's ability to meet regularly with students to provide academic, career and college counseling is impacted by personal student issues. The school board and leadership team indicate that domestic violence is a major concern for the town of Amesbury. School support staff interviews indicate that they are witnessing an increased number of emotional issues within their overall student population. In addition, there is a growing autistic population. Because the adjustment counselor and school psychologist are part-time at the high school, the entire counseling staff spends much of their time dealing with crisis-related situations and less time on preventative services and guidance programming. Staff interviews indicate that the greater number of students with emotional needs require more service in the area of social skills instruction and behavior management planning. Additionally, staff interviews indicate that the guidance department lost a school-to-career coordinator to budget cuts four years ago. The coordinator organized internships and or work/study for 150-200 students that would take place during the last block of the day. She also coordinated a career fair with five other schools in the region. Currently, a guidance counselor has organized internships for ten students. (self study, Endicott survey, faculty interviews, and artifacts).

Amesbury High School participates in Communities Collaborative (CCI) through the District Attorney's Office. Meetings are held monthly and include representatives from all schools within 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. This partnership allows for collaboration and coordination of community and school resources.

Assessment data is used to help guide staff members 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. However, there is no apparent process in place to use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations. School counseling services at Amesbury High School have the foundational structure to ensure each student achieves the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations and, when the areas of need are addressed, a coordinated process to meet student needs will ensure adequate and appropriate support. . (self-study, teacher interviews, evidence box, school committee interviews))

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, conduct ongoing student health assessments, use an appropriate referral process, and use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations. Amesbury High School is staffed with one school nurse to meet the needs of the 612 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 nurse is accessible during school hours to provide both preventative and direct intervention health services, including 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, evaluation and treatment of injuries, illness, and behavioral health issues, with triage and emergency response as necessary. 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. (self study, Parent interviews, faculty interviews,).

The artifacts in the evidence box provide documentation that there are appropriate referral processes in place. For the school year 2010-2011, sixty-eight written referrals were sent to parents for follow up with primary care providers. Health concerns notes during student health assessments throughout the school year include monitoring for and educating students with chronic health conditions and sometimes result in referrals 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 and attends Section 504 and Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings as requested by staff and/or parents.

An example of the health office's use of feedback from the school community to improve services is 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 was developed by the school

nurse, in conjunction with the school administrators, athletic trainer and a guidance counselor. It provides specific academic accommodations for students recovering from head injuries. The nurse has also developed an Emotional/ Behavioral Student Monitoring System, and uses her dual expertise to assist in guidance overflow. The ongoing and effective preventative and direct intervention health services provided by the school nurse ensure that each student is healthy and prepared both physically and mentally to achieve the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations. (evidence box, interview with School Resources committee, self-study, teacher interviews, and panel discussions)

Library /media services are integrated into curriculum and instruction practices and have an adequate number of certified/licensed personal and support staff who are actively engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum, provide a wide range of materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum, ensure that the facility is available and staffed for students and teachers before, during and after school, are responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning, conduct ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations. 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. The library program is integrated into the school's curriculum and supports the high school goals. Teachers work with the library/media specialist to plan lessons as supported by information in the evidence box. Class units such as CP honors research paper and presentation and research on the Great Depression project with psychology teachers are taught in conjunction with classroom teachers. Through various methods, the library collects data from the school community to assist with the goal of achieving learning outcomes. The NEASC self-study survey states 90.2 percent of students and 96.2 percent of faculty use the library and the wide range of materials, technology, and services including online data bases and computer software. The library has 12,500 print titles, twenty-two desktop computers, and three carts of twelve laptops available for students. Destiny, a library circulation software program, has replaced Alexandria. Software programs available include MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and 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 and the library's classroom has a SMARTBoard projector. TV/VCR/DVD technology, overheads, and portable stereo systems are also available. Three local newspapers and forty magazines and journals are on permanent display for student and staff use. According to the head librarian, the latest reference materials were updated in 2008. (self study, Endicott survey, faculty interviews, and artifacts).

The library/media center is available and staffed before, during, and after school: 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. daily, and is utilized in the evenings for various school functions. However, there is a one-hour time period during the afternoon when the library is unstaffed. If the head librarian attempts to teach in the library or a classroom, there is no staff member to supervise the area. As of April 2012, over 38,500 student visits to the library have been recorded, including 600 class visits (60 taught by the library/media specialist). 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; and 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. 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. Library staff members use strategies to elicit feedback and ideas from teachers and students including an activity entitled "How can we help you?" and a student suggestion box. Library staff members assess the data gathered from these activities using a computer-generated analysis. Library/media services at Amesbury High School are integral to curriculum and instruction practices as their resources enhance and improve student learning and support the school's core values and beliefs. (self-study, library staff interviews, and evidence box)

Support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners, have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who have limited collaboration with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to achieve the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations, provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students, and perform ongoing assessments using relevant data. Support services are 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. (self study, administrator interviews, faculty interviews, and artifacts).

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. Based on teacher interviews, small group meetings and evidenced by the Endicott survey, collaboration between and among practitioners is not occurring on a regular basis and thus impacts the school's ability to achieve the stated goals they have outlined for themselves in their self-study. Programs such as the Life Skills Program include students with a range of developmental abilities and forces conversations between support professionals, but regularly scheduled meetings to collaborate on issues facing groups of students are not consistently implemented. The level of participation in regular education classes by children with an Individualized Learning Program depends on students' needs, progress, and goals. Conversations between guidance, special education support personnel, and program

leaders occur on a limited basis to ensure that Amesbury High School is meeting the needs of all students. The Job Development Program helps to prepare both regular and special education students for occupational preparatory through work training. The job developer also serves as the transition specialist, helping students to develop many skills necessary for life after high school, and there is currently a contracted nurse for one student's individual needs. There was no apparent system in place to use relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services. When increased collaboration with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff are formally and regularly present, it will help ensure that all students have the opportunities to meet the 21st Century Learning Expectations. (self-study, teacher interviews, student interviews, and leadership team meetings)

COMMENDATIONS:

1. The collaboration between school support personnel and community agencies
2. The effective means for communicating student support services to families
3. The effective use of technology to deliver a range of support services for each student
4. The ongoing and effective preventative and direct intervention health services provided by the school nurse
5. The library resources that enhance and improve student learning and support the school's core values and beliefs

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Develop a written developmental guidance curriculum
2. Develop and implement a process to use ongoing, relevant feedback from the school community to improve services in guidance and special education support services
3. Ensure processes are in place for special education support staff to regularly and formally collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to achieve the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations
4. Ensure inclusive learning opportunities for all students



Community Resources for Learning

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

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

CONCLUSIONS

The community and the district's governing body provided limited dependable funding for a wide range of school programs and services, sufficient professional and support staff, ongoing professional development and curriculum revision, a full range of technology support, sufficient equipment, and the sufficient instructional materials and supplies. Over the past five years, the school budget has been approved due in part to the collaborative and supportive working relationship between the school committee, mayor, chief financial officer, superintendent, and the business manager. That budget, however, has been level funded for the past five years and this has had an impact on staffing, professional development, curriculum revision, technology, equipment, and instructional materials and supplies. Although the school's programs have been maintained and layoffs avoided, a portion of the professional staff has been eroded over those years through attrition. This has resulted in less consistent elective offerings and larger class sizes in some subject areas. Due to the lack of capital investment, especially in the area of technology, achieving the 21st Century Learning Expectations are impacted. Technology is limited to three laptop carts in the library, three general computer labs, and several technology-based courses. Wireless connection is still an ongoing issue in parts of the building and thus limits the use of technology for all students throughout the school. The school does offer a wide variety of courses across the curriculum, but has been forced to offer them on alternating semesters/years due to staffing shortages, thus affecting curriculum accessibility for all students. According to the Endicott survey, only 21 percent of staff and 26 percent of parents believe that the district's governing body is providing dependable funding for programs and services. When dependable funding for a wide range of school programs and services, sufficient professional and support staff, ongoing professional development and curriculum revision, a full range of technology support, sufficient equipment, and the sufficient instructional materials and supplies is in place, students will have the appropriate opportunities to achieve the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations . (self-study, teacher interview, survey, school board, and students)

To a limited degree, the school develops, plans, and funds programs to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant. Maintenance and repair projects for the building and school plant are coordinated and supervised by the district's director of operations. There is evidence that preventive maintenance of equipment is dependent on warranties and life of the product; however, some classroom equipment, such as sewing machines, is repaired in-house by the maintenance staff. Service contracts are used to maintain the school's computer printers. There is no evidence to support that the high-end equipment, such as SMARTBoards, are categorized as capital equipment and there is no consistent policy for the equitable allocation of equipment among the staff. The building is neat and cleaned on a daily basis. Cleaning and maintenance is provided by two facility technicians and a private outside cleaning company. It was evident that cleaning supplies and equipment were ample, available, and well organized. Two full-time district-wide groundskeepers are responsible for the regular upkeep of the grounds, athletic fields, and tennis courts. Although formal plans do exist for the repair and maintenance of the building, the lack of funding undermines a proactive maintenance schedule. (self-study, facility tour, and teachers)

The community insufficiently funds, and the school attempts to implement, a long-range plan that addresses programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements. The school committee is committed to the concept of long-range planning, but because of the lack of capital investment, that long-range plan has been jeopardized. Programs are maintained but services are being eroded. Various facility needs have been postponed because of budget issues and further investment in technology, both hardware and software, are not being addressed. Staffing is being reduced by not filling positions lost to attrition and course availability has been

reduced. There are three computer labs and computers in the library, but these are inadequate to meet the needs of 21st Century Learning Expectations. According to the Endicott survey, only 31 percent of the staff believes that the school has a long-range plan to address facilities, future programs, services, staffing levels, and capital improvements. As a result of not implementing a long-range plan that addresses programs and services, the ability of the school and students to achieve the schools 21st Century Learning Expectations is hindered. (self-study, teacher interviews, survey, facility tour)

Faculty and building administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget, however their input has had no visible impact on funding. The budgetary process begins in December with individual teachers indicating their needs for the upcoming year based on departmental input. The principal submits a budget proposal to the superintendent by mid-January. Public hearings are held and the school committee holds a formal vote, after extensive review, by late March. If the Municipal Council reduces the budget, the principal and central office administrators determine how the reductions will impact the school's program and services. Interviews with staff indicate that past funding levels do not support expansion of programs and services. Because of the level-funded nature of the budget, input by the faculty has been limited. The ongoing, stagnant nature of the budget has created an atmosphere of frustration and complacency. According to the Endicott survey, only 29 percent of the staff feels that they have input into the development of the budget. However, some departments have been able to sustain and/or expand their offerings due to alternative funding from grants and the Amesbury Educational Foundation. When the budgetary process involves faculty and administration in meaningful ways, the school will be better able to achieve their 21st Century Learning Expectations. (self-study, teacher interview, survey, school board)

The school site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services. Amesbury High School was renovated and an addition was built beginning in the summer of 2004 and completed in December of 2008. The support service areas, which include guidance, health, and special education services, have adequate space and facilities including small and large conference rooms, offices with soundproofing, small private testing rooms, and 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. The building also houses a large library, a greenhouse, and a television studio that help to support the needs of various programs. The general large space areas (auditorium, library, TV studio) have state of the art equipment for professional level opportunities for the students. Technology opportunities are limited and general classrooms contain one stationary desktop computer for teacher access with most classrooms having a whiteboard, LCD projector and document camera; however, there are a limited number of interactive SMART Boards that are underutilized. With the expansion of the wireless network to the classrooms, students will have additional technology. As a result, the Amesbury High School site and physical plant has the capacity to deliver high-quality programs and services. However, despite the pristine condition of the public areas of the building, some areas of concern are storage, water damage, and signage. Although all classrooms contain storage closets and cabinets, an abundance of textbooks are housed in the maintenance facility workroom in the basement. These books are inventoried and, thanks to the cooperative nature of the staff between veteran and new teachers, said storage may not lead to lost or forgotten assets; however, the location may lead to deterioration of the collection. There is extensive water damage, mold, and mildew in the former athletic storage area that has precipitated the moving of the salvaged athletic uniforms and equipment to offices and small classrooms. Practice rooms in the music department are now being used for storage, thus taking valuable space away from music instruction. Signage in classrooms is well marked but directional signs are needed for larger areas, such as the high school's offices, library, auditorium, gymnasium and the district central offices housed in the building. With the

addition of a properly funded plan, the school site and plant will support the delivery of high quality school programs and serves. (self-study, facility tour, and teacher interview)

The school maintains documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. 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 well organized and posted in the director's office, with copies also posted on the school's website. Shower and eye-wash equipment functioned properly during a demonstration in the classroom. The building was in full compliance with all fire, health, and safety regulations and thus meets all applicable federal and state laws. (self-study, facility tour, and teacher interview)

All professional staff actively engages parents and families as partners in each student's education, but has been less effective with those families who have been less connected with the school. Through a variety of methods, Amesbury High School actively engages parents and families as partners in each student's education. Connect Ed online calls, e-mails, teacher Webpages, and Aspen (Student Information System) are four ways in which most parents are informed of school-related news. All teachers have e-mail and parents are encouraged to contact teachers with any concerns. Parents may join numerous committees that support their child's involvement including the School Council, GradNight, SEAPAC (Special Education in Amesbury Parent Advisory Council), and All-Sports Boosters, which offer several opportunities for parental involvement. Many school events are videotaped and can be viewed on the local cable station. Despite the numerous attempts to reach out to parents, however, only 41 percent of parents surveyed feel that the staff actively engaged them as a partner in their child's education. When all parents are actively engaged in their student's education, effective learning is more attainable. (self-study, teacher interview, survey, facility tour)

Amesbury High School fosters strong and productive partnerships with business, community, and institutes of higher education that enhance student learning and allow students an opportunity to see real world applications of their studies. The school has created business partnerships consistent with its core values and expectations for student learning by providing students opportunities for job shadowing, mentoring, internships, apprenticeships, and on a limited basis, a School-to-Career Program. AHS has also forged relationships with higher education institutions. The district's partnership with the Northern Essex Community College includes opportunities for professional discourse and opportunities for college instructors to teach on the AHS campus. 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. Students involved in this program are able to earn a number of college credits prior to graduating from high school. The school's partnerships with area businesses and institutes of higher education have supported the local community while providing students a chance to apply and enhance their knowledge and skills. The school's effort to reach out to the local community colleges allows students to have authentic college learning experiences, which enhance opportunities for students to succeed and achieve. (self-study, meetings with teachers, meetings with parents, survey, meeting with students, and panel presentation)

COMMENDATIONS:

1. The formal partnerships with local colleges
2. The meaningful community service opportunities required of all students for graduation
3. The pristine condition of the buildings and grounds

4. The dedicated and professional faculty, staff, and administration
5. The ongoing and active engagement of local businesses and organizations that serve as partners with the school
6. The partnership with Amesbury Educational Association

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Ensure funds to implement a long-range plan that addresses programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements.
2. Provide dependable funding for a wide range of school programs and services, sufficient professional and support staff, ongoing professional development and curriculum revision, a full range of technology support, sufficient equipment, and the sufficient instructional materials and supplies is in place students will have the appropriate opportunities to achieve the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations
3. Address the water damage in the former athletic storage area
4. Resolve computer accessibility issues in order to meet current and future curriculum needs
5. Address general storage issues within the school
6. Develop and implement a plan to increase parent involvement in the school specifically with those families who have been less connected

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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

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

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

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

The visiting committee expresses its appreciation for the hospitality provided by the entire staff at Amesbury High School as well as its thanks to the principal, superintendent, steering committee, self-study standards committees, school committee, teachers, parents, and students who willingly provided us with the information and feedback necessary to write this report.

**Amesbury High School
NEASC Accreditation Visit
May 5 - 8, 2013**

Visiting Committee

<p>Daniel Warner Narragansett High School Narragansett, RI 02882</p>	<p>Douglas Dias Medway High School Medway, MA 02053</p>
<p>Sally Rivard Lake Region Union High School Orleans, VT 05860</p>	<p>Edward Chomka Sutton memorial High School Sutton, MA 01590</p>
<p>Peter Dobrowolski Tantasqua Regional High School Fiskdale, MA 01518</p>	<p>Caroline Fitzpatrick Douglas High School Douglas, MA 01516</p>
<p>Peter Breen Hoosac Valley High School Cheshire, MA 01225</p>	<p>Matthew Carroll Foxborough High School Foxborough, MA 02035</p>
<p>Karen Higgins Shepherd Hill Regional High School Dudley, MA 01571</p>	<p>Lois Barbour Randolph High School Randolph, MA 02368</p>
<p>Nichole Charbonneau Dartmouth High School Dartmouth, MA 02748</p>	<p>Diane Anderson Sanborn Regional High School Kingston, NH 03848</p>
<p>Robyn Biondi Uxbridge High School Uxbridge, MA 01569</p>	<p>Terrance Ingano Clinton Public Schools Clinton, MA 01510</p>
<p>Kathy Edwards Marblehead High School Marblehead, MA 01945</p>	
<p>Linda Maresca Tahanto Regional Middle/High School Boylston, MA 01505</p>	

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

Committee on Public Secondary Schools

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

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

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. The creation of core values and beliefs that reflects a collaborative school and community process.
2. The set of analytic rubrics developed to support the seven learning expectations.
3. The initial and developing use of the core values and beliefs to guide decisions of the school.
4. The adoption of a common template for curriculum reporting.
5. The faculty members for attention to curricular development without having fully articulated direction and consistent leadership in place.
6. The faculty members for developing sound curricular offerings with a minimum of resources to support their efforts.
7. The administration for being attentive to the social, civic and academic needs of the school population by making courses such as Child Development/Baby Care, CPR Training, and art graduation requirements for all students.
8. The extensive opportunities provided to students for authentic learning both in and out of the school.
9. The collaboration in the Professional Learning Communities and Teaching and Learning Alliance.
10. The individual instruction adjusted in connection with formative and summative assessments as well as with self-evaluation and student feedback.
11. The student choice within a teacher-directed assignment.
12. The personalization of instruction.
13. The responsiveness to student concerns during instructional time.
14. The abundant organization of small group and paired learning opportunities.
15. The opportunities to apply knowledge to other experiences or situations, as well as to use skills outside of the classroom.
16. The availability of faculty members for extra help.
17. The framework for employing a formal process of evaluation, based on school-wide rubrics to assess school and individual progress is in place with individual teachers.
18. The teachers' use of a wide array of formative and summative assessments and the foundation for collecting data to address the inequities in student performance.
19. The significant effort to allow students to interact with the curriculum and to display skill acquisition in order to reach numerous learning styles despite large class sizes.
20. The initiation of a process to implement 21st Century Learning Expectations and unit-specific goals.
21. The teachers' formal and informal collaboration to discuss and improve formative and summative assessment strategies.
22. The initiation of a process for use of instructional strategies and the tools for timely feedback for teachers (ASPEN).
23. The beginning of a formal process of reporting, reviewing and revising, and the significant effort to meet the requirements of the indicator.
24. The supportive, safe, respectful and positive school culture in which students take responsibility for their learning, share ownership and exhibit school pride.
25. The inclusion of heterogeneously grouped core courses.
26. The comprehensive Advisory Program.
27. The implementation of the new teacher evaluation system.
28. The staff 's willingness to examine and commit to creative ways to extend teacher availability.

29. The staff's commitment to providing the best possible educational opportunities and support to students.
30. The cooperative and collaborative relationship among administrators and faculty members.
31. The multiple opportunities for meaningful engagement for teachers, students, and parents.
32. The teachers' initiative in expanding best practice teaching.
33. The collegial relationships among leadership team members.
34. The collaboration between school support personnel and community agencies.
35. The effective means for communicating student support services to families.
36. The effective use of technology to deliver a range of support services for each student.
37. The ongoing and effective preventative and direct intervention health services provided by the school nurse.
38. The library resources that enhance and improve student learning and support the school's core values and beliefs.
39. The formal partnerships with local colleges.
40. The meaningful community service opportunities required of all students for graduation
41. The pristine condition of the buildings and grounds.
42. The dedicated and professional faculty, staff, and administration.
43. The ongoing and active engagement of local businesses and organizations that serve as partners with the school.
44. The partnership with Amesbury Educational Association.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop definitive timelines on the implementation of the Social #2 and Civic #1 learning expectations.
2. Ensure all 21st century school-wide learning expectations have associated, specific school-wide analytic rubrics
3. Develop a written plan to regularly review the core values, beliefs, and 21st Century Learning Expectations with all constituencies which incorporates current research on 21st Century Learning Expectations, multiple data sources , as well as district and school priorities
4. Develop and implement a process to ensure the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st Century Learning Expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school, drive curriculum, instruction , and assessment in every classroom, and guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations
5. Prioritize the implementation and reliable operation of the Aspen portal
6. Establish a system to ensure that all units of study include 21st Century Learning Expectations, as well as essential questions, concepts, content, skills, instructional strategies and assessment practices that include school-wide rubrics are accessible on the ASPEN student information portal to all constituents
7. Implement processes to ensure that the curriculum provides opportunities for students to achieve high order thinking, inquiry and problem-solving skills in an academically challenging environment
8. Develop and implement a process to ensure clear alignment between the written and the taught curriculum

9. Develop and implement a system to provide effective curricular coordination and the vertical alignment between and among all academic areas within the school as well as sending schools in the district
10. Develop a formalized the curriculum review cycle to provide for the regular review, evaluation and revision of curriculum
11. Establish a formal hierarchy of responsibility for curricular development and oversight
12. Ensure the timeliness and availability of course offerings to students
13. Allocate appropriate resources to ensure that the adequate levels of staffing, instructional materials, technology, equipment and supplies are available to support classroom instruction and the delivery of the curriculum
14. Utilize data from assessments and current research to develop, evaluate, and revise curriculum
15. Establish defined roles and responsibilities concerning Team Leaders/Subject Area Coordinators in order to stay current in and disseminate research and best practices
16. Increase opportunities for purposeful reading in professional journals, on current research in pedagogical strategies and content-specific areas, to share with colleagues and to inform instruction
17. Develop and implement processes to ensure teachers strategically differentiate instruction to meet the needs of students
18. Develop and implement a process to ensure all students are engaged in cross-disciplinary learning and instruction that emphasize inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills
19. Provide teachers with formal opportunities to collaboratively meet to examine student work for the purpose of improving instruction
20. Develop and implement a process to gather input from parents, students and other teachers to improve instructional practices
21. Develop a formalized process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations
22. Implement a formalized system to report individual students' achievement of the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations to the student and their families
23. Implement a formalized system to report in aggregate the school's achievement of the 21st Century Learning Expectations to the community
24. Ensure teachers communicate applicable 21st Century Learning Expectations to students prior to each unit of study and prior to summative assessments
25. Provide formal opportunities for teachers to collaborate on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments
26. Design a plan to ensure educators report feedback in a timely manner on ASPEN
27. Provide formal opportunities to ensure teachers individually and collaboratively examine a wide range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instruction
28. Ensure gradinf practices are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning
29. Review the school's schedule to ensure the organization of time best supports the learning needs of all students, researched based instruction, and professional collaboration among
30. Develop and implement a plan to ensure appropriate class sizes and teacher loads
31. Provide clarity and vision for instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations
32. Increase opportunities for for teachers, students, and parents to be involved in meaningful and defined roles in the decision making processes of the school
33. Develop a written developmental guidance curriculum

34. 2. Develop and implement a process to use ongoing, relevant feedback from the school community to improve services in guidance and special education support services
35. 3. Ensure processes are in place for special education support staff to regularly and formally collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to achieve the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations
36. 4. Ensure inclusive learning opportunities for all students
37. Ensure funds to implement a long-range plan that addresses programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements.
38. Provide dependable funding for a wide range of school programs and services, sufficient professional and support staff, ongoing professional development and curriculum revision, a full range of technology support, sufficient equipment, and the sufficient instructional materials and supplies is in place students will have the appropriate opportunities to achieve the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations
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