

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

Commission on Public Schools



Committee on Public Secondary Schools

**Report of the Visiting Team for
Bacon Academy**

Colchester, CT

April 29, 2018 - May 02, 2018

Tony Gasper, Chair
Carol Luckenbach, Assistant Chair
Matthew Peel, Principal

STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS

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

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

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

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

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

Teaching and Learning Standards

Core Values and Beliefs About Learning

Curriculum

Instruction

Assessment of and for Student Learning

Support Standards

School Culture and Leadership

School Resources for Learning

Community Resources for Learning

CORE VALUES, BELIEFS, AND LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

CURRICULUM

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

INSTRUCTION

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT LEARNING

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

core values and beliefs about learning.

SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Support Standard

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

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

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

SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Support Standard

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

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

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

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Support Standard

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

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

School and Community Summary

School and Community Summary

Located in the fringe rural town of Colchester, Connecticut, Bacon Academy and Bacon Academy Alternative Education serve approximately 820 students in grades 9 through 12. Because of Colchester's central location in northern New London County, the workforce of Colchester enjoys varied employment opportunities in Hartford, Norwich, Glastonbury, Manchester, and the Connecticut shoreline. Industries in Colchester include retail, health care, construction, food service, and some light manufacturing.

The population of Colchester is approximately 16,000 residents. According to the Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC) Town Profile, the residents of the town are 92.4% white, .9% black, 1.3% Asian, 2% Hispanic, 0.4% Native American and 1.8% multirace. The number of households in town number nearly 5,750, with a median household income of \$97,313. The percentage of residents holding a bachelor's degree or higher is consistent with the state average of 38%. Of Bacon Academy's students, 14% are enrolled in the federal free and reduced lunch program, and 3.8% of the town were identified as living at the poverty level from 2010-2014 (compared with 9.1% of the county and 10.5% of the state).

Approximately 2,450 prekindergarten through grade 12 students are housed in the four schools in the district: elementary, intermediate, middle, and high school. The district was identified as District Reference Group (DRG) D in the 2006 classification and was unofficially re-assigned to DRG C in 2016. The central office for the district is located in the town hall and has four administrators: superintendent, director of teaching and learning, director of pupil services, and assistant director of pupil services. There are a total of nine building-level administrators across the district and a total of 215.52 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers.

For fiscal year 2017-2018, the district's budget is \$40,636,405 and a per pupil expenditure of \$14,925, which is less than the state average of \$16,579. For school year 2017-2018, the education budget is 73.42% of the total town budget. Property taxes needed to support the education budget are 67.75% of the total amount to be raised from taxation.

Teachers at Bacon Academy and Bacon Academy Alternative Education number 72 FTE teachers, along with three administrators, eight paraprofessionals, four guidance counselors, three social workers, and one school psychologist.

The high school has a current enrollment of just under 800 students with a 7% decline in enrollment over the last two years. With anticipated declining enrollment, the school has begun accepting 10 tuition students per year from a nearby city into grade 9. This program will expand each year with the addition of 10 new grade 9 students, for an eventual total of 40 tuition students. These students will provide a small boost to enrollment but will also supply tuition dollars to Bacon Academy and the school district.

In 2014, 99% of students graduated and 1% dropped out. In 2015, 94% of students graduated, 1.7% dropped out, and 4.3% of students were retained. The Class of 2016 boasted a 99% graduation rate, with only three of 219 students retained. The 2017 graduation rate was 95%; of those who did not graduate, 2.5% are still enrolled.

In school year (SY) 2015-2016, the daily attendance rate for students was 94.4%. In SY 2016-2017, the daily student attendance rate was 93.7%. In SY 2015-2016, teachers' attendance rate averaged 96.2%. Forty-nine teachers were absent for fewer than six days during the school year; 21 teachers were absent between 6 and 12 days; five teachers were absent for 12 to 18 days; and one teacher was absent for more than 18 days. These days do not include absences covered under Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or Workers' Compensation.

Of the 216 graduates of Bacon Academy in 2016, 62% headed to four-year colleges and 17% enrolled in two-year colleges. Three of the 216 (1%) entered into the military. The remaining 19% entered the workforce. Some of the more prestigious universities the Class of 2016 elected to attend were Bowdoin, Wellesley, Northeastern, and Rochester Institute of Technology. Graduates chose to pursue education in fields such as environmental

studies, international relations, computer engineering, and finance. Of the 201 graduates of Bacon Academy in 2017, 67% headed to four-year colleges, 20% enrolled in two-year colleges, and 2% entered the military. Of the remaining 2017 graduates, 4% intended to enter the workforce, 4% intended to take a year off, and 3% were undecided. Some of the more prestigious universities Class of 2017 graduates elected to attend were Princeton, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Dartmouth, Colby, Trinity, and Clemson. Graduates chose to pursue education in diverse fields, such as early childhood development, nursing, biology, and business.

Colchester and Bacon Academy offer other educational opportunities for its citizens. Vernon Adult Education runs an evening program at Bacon Academy for both GED and diploma. Bacon Academy's summer school program is available not only for students who need credit recovery but also for those who are interested in credit advancement in classes such as physical education. Additional educational opportunities are available for community members and high school students through Colchester Parks and Recreation.

Bacon Academy partners with local businesses to benefit students. Students can participate in summer internships at Electric Boat and Dime Bank. Backus Hospital sponsors junior volunteers. Students involved in Robotics Club are sponsored by Dominion Energy. Hawk Integrated Plastic partners with all Bacon Computer Aided Design (CAD) classes. Students create three-dimensional modeling for Hawk Plastics using CAD and the school's 3-D printers. The Life Skills class partners with Special Olympics, local soup kitchens, and students practice shopping, banking, and navigating restaurants in the local community. The capstone class for seniors has established professional relationships with companies such as Hartford Insurance, Colchester Youth and Family Services, Apple Rehab, Backus Hospital, law firms, Colchester Parks and Recreation, a professional photography studio, and a finance company.

To broaden its offerings, Bacon Academy has partnered with four post-secondary schools: Syracuse University, Eastern Connecticut State University, University of Connecticut, and Three Rivers Community College.

Beginning in SY 2017-2018, Bacon Academy students who are enrolled in Accounting II are able to receive college credit through Syracuse University's Project Advance program.

Through Eastern Connecticut State University Early College Experience (ECE), students are able to receive college credit for Calculus A/B and Spanish Language. Through University of Connecticut, students are able to receive ECE credit for AP Physics I and II, English Literature & Composition, Environmental Science, French Global Culture, French Language and Civilization, Lifespan Development, and Music Fundamentals.

Bacon Academy students can participate in two programs at Three Rivers Community College (TRCC). The first of these is the College-Career Pathway program (CCP), and students can take six credits per year with no cost to them. These courses at TRCC include Advanced Ceramics, Advanced Graphics, Advanced Weight Training and Fitness, Architecture, Business Communications, Chemistry or Honors Chemistry, Drawing I, French IV, Honors Algebra II, Advanced Math, Pre-Calculus, Honors Physics, STEM Physics, Human Anatomy/Physiology, Introduction to Fitness, Manufacturing 2, Marine Science, Merchandising Operations Management, Painting I, Physics or STEM Physics, Pre-Engineering, Preschooler, and Science and Alternative Energy. The teachers of these courses must apply to TRCC and are considered adjunct professors; they submit their curriculum, which must be approved by TRCC. If the students earn a 73% or better, they earn college credit. In the second program, the Three Rivers Community College Partnership Program (TRCC-PP), juniors and seniors with a GPA of 2.7 can enroll in courses at TRCC tuition-free. These courses may count as credit toward high school graduation, if certain requirements are met.

Beginning in grade 10, students can enroll in Advanced Placement (AP) courses for potential college credit. These courses include the following: Biology, Calculus AB, Calculus BC, Chemistry, Computer Science, English Language & Composition, English Literature & Composition, Environmental Science, Human Geography, Music Theory, Physics 1, Physics 2, Spanish Language, Statistics, Studio Art, US History, US Government and Politics, and World History.

Bacon Academy students are recognized for their accomplishments in numerous ways. The START Conference for freshmen and Hugh O'Brien Youth (HOBY) Conference for sophomores are state-wide leadership conferences that motivate and develop future leaders. The American Legion sponsors a nationally recognized

conference, Boys State and Girls State. Through peer voting, students are selected to attend a program to learn how government works while developing leadership skills and appreciation for their rights as citizens. Bacon Academy students can apply to the school's chapter of National Honor Society. The school posts its honor roll quarterly, with three tiers of achievement possible: high honors with distinction (students with A- or higher in all courses), high honors (students with A- in most courses, one grade at a B), and honors (students with higher than B- in all courses). Students who reach high honors with distinction for three marking periods are recognized with their parents at a High Honors celebration in the spring. The Eastern CT Chamber of Commerce breakfast honors juniors who have demonstrated leadership and service. Some students are awarded Bobcat Core Value cards for demonstrating the school's core values. The Connecticut Association Board of Education Leadership Award is given to the student who demonstrates service to community, school, and academic abilities. Each spring, the school honors students during separate underclassmen and senior awards nights. These students are recognized in all academic, elective, and sports areas.

Core Values, Beliefs and Learning Expectations

Respect Responsibility Achievement Safety Compassion

- Pursuing our passions
- Exhibiting respect for ourselves and others
- Achieving through hard work and resilience
- Contributing to a safe environment for all
- Embracing diversity

BACON10

1. Students effectively communicate (by verbal, non-verbal, written and visual means) independently and collaboratively according to their audience and purpose.
2. Students collaborate by being active participants in the school and within the community.
3. Students contribute to their community through participation in service learning.
4. Students explore, choose, and engage in new and diverse experiences.
5. Students recognize and examine perspectives of global themes.
6. Students actively engage in the inquiry process in order to articulate individualized educational and post-secondary goals.
7. Students solve problems using academic, technical, social, and creative skills.
8. Students analyze and evaluate sources in order to synthesize information and reach relevant conclusions.
9. Students take a position and substantiate claims using a variety of sources.
10. Students use technology ethically and responsibly to complete tasks and achieve goals.

Related Files

- [2018-03-26-12:03_official-bacon10-poster.pdf](#)

Introduction

Introduction

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

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

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

Teaching and Learning Standards

- Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations
- Curriculum
- Instruction
- Assessment of and for Student Learning

Support of Teaching and Learning Standards

- School Culture and Leadership
- School Resources for Learning
- Community Resources for Learning

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

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit - The School Self-Study

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At Bacon Academy, a committee of nine members, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned teachers and administrators in the school to appropriate subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities, and facilities available for young people. In addition to faculty members, the self-study committees included the input of twelve students, seven parents, two citizens, two central office professionals, and one school board member.

The self-study of Bacon Academy extended over a period of 14 school months from April 2016 to June 2017. The visiting team was pleased to note that students, citizens, parents, school board members joined the professional staff in the self-study deliberations.

Public schools evaluated by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools must complete appropriate materials to assess their alignment with the Standards for Accreditation and the quality of their educational offerings in light of

the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations, and unique student population. In addition to using the Self-Study Guides developed by a representative group of New England educators and approved by the Committee, Bacon Academy also used questionnaires developed by The Research Center at Endicott College to reflect the concepts contained in the Standards for Accreditation. These materials provided discussion items for a comprehensive assessment of the school by the professional staff during the self-study.

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

The Process Used by the Visiting Team

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

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- seventy-two hours shadowing 16 students for a half day
- a total of 24 hours of classroom observation (in addition to time shadowing students)
- numerous informal observations in and around the school
- tours of the facility
- individual meetings with 30 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and the assessment of student learning
- group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers

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

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

Standard 1 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The school collectively engaged in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process to identify and commit to its core values but has not yet articulated beliefs about learning.

The process for creating the 21st century learning expectations, otherwise known as the Bacon 10, was inclusive of staff members, administration, students, and parents, as evidenced by community and teacher surveys and the minutes from subcommittee meetings. Additionally, in developing the learning expectations initially in 2012, Bacon Academy asked business and industry leaders for input on their vision of a high school graduate and translated this vision into what is now the Bacon 10. It is clear there has been a recent rebranding and communicating of the Bacon 10. The Bacon 10 poster is proudly displayed throughout classrooms, hallways and offices, although the school's website currently shows an earlier version. Despite this discrepancy, students and teachers can in general state the underlying meaning of the Bacon 10. The use and purpose of the Bacon 10 have not yet been communicated clearly across multiple communication platforms, nor have distinctions been made among academic, civic, and social expectations, thus impeding students' and staff members' ability to use the document as a guide for important decisions.

The school's core values were revised within the past year by a small group including the superintendent, a parent, administrators, students, and teachers, in order to make them more relevant to learning at Bacon Academy. These values appear on the Bacon 10 posters found throughout the building, but they have not yet been incorporated in the life of the school in a meaningful way. The administration confirmed that the student body remains unaware of the new core values. The school is planning on officially rolling out the new core values in the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year; a Core Values Rally is planned for the end of the current school year that will introduce the school to the revised core values. Utilization of the revised core values is referred to in the school's two-year and five-year plans. Currently, there is no evidence of beliefs about learning separate from the core values and 21st century learning expectations.

When the school has clearly defined and implemented its core values and beliefs about learning and has distinguished clearly among its academic, civic, and social expectations, these can be used to guide curriculum, instruction, and assessment programs and policies that will support student learning.

Sources of Evidence

- teachers
- parents
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 1 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The school has developed 21st century learning expectations for all students that are potentially challenging but not yet measurable; the academic, social and civic competencies have not yet been defined by specific and measurable criteria for success, such as school-wide analytic rubrics, which define targeted high levels of achievement.

The school's 21st century learning expectations, known as the Bacon 10, were developed based on research collected by a variety of stakeholders in the school community, including staff members, administration, students, parents, and representatives of business and industry. The research completed was extensive and thorough and was analyzed to create the initial set of challenging learning expectations. These same learning expectations were then adapted into the Bacon 10, with the teachers and administrators helping to guide students toward a vision of what a successful graduate looks like at Bacon Academy.

The Bacon 10 includes academic, civic and social expectations that have not been separated so that stakeholders can easily discriminate among them, which hinders the ability to create specific rubrics that measure success. The faculty as a whole and the leadership teams have met to create measurable standards based on the Bacon 10, but no desired level of achievement that the school expects each student to attain had been identified. The administration required that all teachers use one of the Bacon 10 expectations as their student learning outcome (SLO) for the 2017-2018 school year, implementing this expectation in at least one lesson during the year. The teachers and administrative team by their own admission have no plan to use the current data collected via this year's SLOs. However, there is a plan to implement more meaningful use of the data in the future. The five-year plan establishes a graduation requirement for students based on the successful completion of a Bacon 10 portfolio, but no tool for measurement has yet been developed.

Once the school has clearly identified its academic, civic and social expectations and developed and implemented specific and measurable criteria for success in meeting the 21st century learning expectations, students will be able to track the degree to which they are meeting these expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- students
- department leaders
- school leadership

Standard 1 Indicator 3

Conclusions

The school's core values and 21st century learning expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school; however, they rarely drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment and are limited in the ways they guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations.

Currently, there is no evidence that the school has articulated its beliefs about learning. Core values are in place and visible; however, they have yet to be formally accepted and utilized by the school community. Bacon Academy has a lively and active culture that is rich in achievement, respect and compassion. The faculty and students have positive relationships with one another that enhance the students' learning environment. It is evident that the teachers and students have mutual respect and compassion for one another. The availability of the many extracurricular activities, clubs, and higher education courses, and the staff's willingness to volunteer help to ensure the everyday implementation of the core values and learning expectations. Bacon Academy showcases compassion daily through the teachers' close work with students, the positive relationship the school community has with the life skills program, and the way the students relate to one another in classes, the hallways and throughout the building.

While the school is using the Bacon 10 as part of teachers' evaluation performance evaluation objectives, currently there is little evidence of the ways in which the core values and learning expectations drive curriculum, instruction and assessment. In some classes and departments there is some evidence of the use of the learning expectations, but there is no evidence of the students being assessed on the degree to which they meet those expectations. The teachers have developed common assessments in some departments such as social studies, but these are not overtly or formally linked to the Bacon 10. Currently the Bacon 10 does not drive budgetary decisions or resource allocations.

When the school clearly identifies its beliefs about learning and formally implements the core values and learning expectations into curriculum, instruction and assessment in every classroom and as a guide to inform the school policies, procedures, decisions and resource allocations, the school will be able to provide the students with a well-rounded learning experience that supports students' achievement of the 21st learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- teachers
- students
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 1 Indicator 4

Conclusions

While the school has not had a formal revision plan in the past, there is a plan for the future to regularly review and revise the core values and 21st century learning expectations. Bacon Academy implements tools such as analytic school-wide rubrics, to collect data related to the core values and 21st century learning expectations. The Bacon 10 started as a set of learning expectations that were researched-based and developed by the community and school stakeholders. The five-year plan calls for the Bacon 10 to be reviewed and assessed in the spring of 2021 and to become a graduation requirement in 2024 as assessed by a student portfolio. Teachers discussed the Bacon 10 during departmental PLC time and chose which Bacon 10 expectation to focus on for their SLOs during 2017-2018, but there is no plan in place currently for how the data will be looked at and used for review/revision. Establishing a regular review of its core values, beliefs, and learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, and on district and school priorities, facilitates the school's ability to make decisions that drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment and that guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 1 Commendations

Commendation

The development of 21st century learning expectations based on input collected from stakeholders including industry, community members, and the school community

Commendation

The alignment of the school's culture with the core values of respect, responsibility, achievement, safety, and compassion

Commendation

The involvement of significant numbers of stakeholders in the process to identify shared core values and learning expectations

Standard 1 Recommendations

Recommendation

Ensure the revised core values and beliefs about learning are included in updates to the written curriculum

Recommendation

Identify and endorse beliefs about learning that inform the school culture and guide curriculum, instruction, and assessment programs and practices

Standard 2 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The curriculum is not yet purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Bacon Academy's 21st century learning expectations, referred to as Bacon 10, are identified in the school's student handbook, program of studies and website. However, they are not listed or referenced in the curriculum guides, and written curriculum is not clearly driven by Bacon 10 for student learning. Since Bacon 10 was created in the spring of 2016, the school has not collected data for the purpose of making decisions to add or delete courses or units from the curriculum. It is not clear in the curriculum guides by grade level and course level where students specifically practice Bacon 10; as a result the guides do not show connections between course content and the Bacon 10. Although Bacon 10 is not directly referenced, most teachers report that the academic expectations which were adopted for the Bacon 10 were already embedded in their units of study. However the civic and social expectations are not embedded in any of the curricula. Teachers reported that departmental audits were performed to evaluate which, if any, of the Bacon 10 skills were already being taught, but this is not reflected in the guides seen on the website. Once the curriculum is purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve the Bacon 10, teachers will have direct guidance on instructional strategies and assessments that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to successfully achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- teachers
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 2 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The curriculum is not yet written in a common format in which all documents include units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills; the school's 21st century learning expectations; instructional strategies; assessment practices that include the use of specific and measurable criteria for success, such as school-wide analytic or course-specific rubrics. Although a draft of a template for use in writing all curriculum documents has been developed, it has not yet been consistently implemented, and the draft curriculum template does not require specific connections to the Bacon 10. Evidence of communication between the committee that created the Bacon 10 and the district curriculum team was not provided. Curriculum documents found on the district website display a variety of formats. Some documents on the website include essential questions, concepts, content and skills, and instructional practices, while others do not. For example, the social studies department's geography course provides an example of a curriculum document that has all the common format criteria except for the Bacon 10 and school-wide analytic rubrics. Although the school does not have formal school-wide analytic rubrics, assignments, student work samples, and classroom observations show that most disciplines are using departmental rubrics to varying degrees to assess student learning. When the district implements a common curriculum format that includes all the necessary components, students, parents, and teachers will experience consistency across all content areas that will support students' achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations and teacher collaboration will be facilitated.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 2 Indicator 3

Conclusions

The curriculum engages most students in depth of understanding and application of knowledge through inquiry and problem solving, higher order thinking, and authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school; however, only some areas emphasize the informed and ethical use of technology, and cross-disciplinary learning is limited.

A review of the school's curriculum, classroom visitations, and discussions with students and teachers confirm that the curriculum provides students with varied opportunities to engage in inquiry, problem solving and higher order thinking as well as the authentic application of knowledge. The Endicott survey reveals that nearly 74 percent of students and 77 percent of staff believe this to be true. Laboratory experiments, Socratic seminars, debates, research projects and some offerings of integrated technology provide ample opportunities for students to be challenged to grow as individual learners. However, some students who are not in Advanced Placement (AP), Early College Experience (ECE) or honors courses report that their courses are not as challenging. Classroom visitation data revealed that students in AP/ECE courses engaged in higher order thinking skills more than twice as frequently as those in other levels.

Currently, no structures are in place to ensure that the curriculum emphasizes application of knowledge through cross-disciplinary learning. Cross-disciplinary connections occur, but not necessarily by design. For example, in junior English, the study of *The Great Gatsby* and *The Crucible* overlap with social studies units on the 1920's and the Salem witch trials, but a lack of sufficient books for all students to be reading these works at the same time means that only some students will experience a timely cross-disciplinary connection. Through teacher efforts, curriculum was developed for cross-disciplinary courses such as Community Activism, which emphasizes science and the humanities to address social issues like water rights, use of visual media displays, and letter-writing campaigns. Environmental Science and Alternative Energy courses couple math and science content with connections to real-world issues such as the economic implications of utilizing wind turbines and solar energy. In social studies, teachers emphasize writing and project-based learning that utilizes multiple modalities.

Authentic learning opportunities are pervasive. Students have the opportunity to enroll in a semester-long senior Capstone course that requires students to research an area of study, network and meet with related professionals outside the school, and give an oral presentation regarding their project to members of the school and community. Additionally, students in a family and consumer science course, Teen Issues, work with Colchester Youth Services to conduct a food drive for the community. Accounting I students experience real-life applications such as filling out W4 forms and ledgers. Upperclassmen have the opportunity to enroll in numerous elective course offerings as well as independent studies based on student interest.

There is a lack of evidence in curriculum documents themselves that the curriculum emphasizes informed and ethical use of technology. However, classroom observations and discussions with students and teachers reveal that students are informed and aware of the responsible use of technology as evidenced in classroom lessons and assignments.

Because the curriculum has a strong emphasis on inquiry, problem solving, higher order thinking and authentic learning opportunities, students have ample opportunity to deepen their learning in many areas of the curriculum and once all departments have curriculum with an emphasis on cross-disciplinary learning as well as informed and ethical use of technology, students will be assured of an even richer and more relevant learning experience that will more fully support their achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations

- self-study
- teachers
- department leaders
- school website

Standard 2 Indicator 4

Conclusions

There is inconsistent alignment between the written and taught curriculum. Due to the timeline of the curriculum revision process, departments are at various stages of curriculum revision. A specific department can be working on curriculum evaluation, development, implementation, or monitoring. Although this curriculum revision cycle is in place, the district made a decision to break from the revision plan for various reasons. As a result, the written curriculum is not strongly aligned with the taught curriculum and has not been updated in a timely fashion. Individual teachers and some departments have taken it upon themselves to make revisions to the Board of Education-approved curriculum even if they were not in the curriculum development stage of the revision cycle. As displayed on the school's website, the math curriculum was last revised in 2007. More accurately, this math curriculum was revised in 2013 to integrate Common Core Standards. This 2013 version was not available on the website but was made available upon request by the district Director of Teaching and Learning. This inconsistency creates confusion among teachers and department leaders who are unsure of which document is the proper one to guide their instruction.

The taught curriculum varies among instructional practices that are closely aligned with formal written curriculum; closely aligned with the informally updated written curriculum; or not aligned with either formal or informal curricular documents. The English department, as a whole, is consistently aligned with the board-approved written curriculum. The department uses unit essential questions, concepts, skills, and has assessments and accompanying rubrics that illustrate students' mastery. The world languages department, on the other hand, has had less opportunity to revise curriculum, but the teachers within the department have taken it upon themselves to use department and professional learning community (PLC) time to create informal curricular documents. Lastly, the school lacks school-wide accountability standards to ensure that the written curriculum is taught. However, within some departments, grade-level common assessments, including common midterm and final exams, ensure that the written curriculum has been taught. Once all departments have appropriately and authentically completed the curriculum revision process, teachers at Bacon Academy will have access to written curriculum and will be able to implement aligned instructional practices with fidelity so students can practice the 21st century skills that will allow them to be successful post-graduation.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- teacher interview
- central office personnel

Standard 2 Indicator 5

Conclusions

While the district has provided structures and some time for curricular coordination and vertical articulation, the coordination and articulation does not exist in classroom practice between and among academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district. The Colchester School District has a curriculum revision cycle document known as the Curriculum Review Schedule. This document was revised to be applicable for the five-year period 2017-2022. Time has been allocated for curriculum evaluation, development, and monitoring. However, either the time allotment has been insufficient to support articulation of curriculum or the time that was allocated for such work has been used for other school initiatives. Teachers use department meeting time, PLC meeting time, professional development time, and paid summer hours if available.

The process of vertically aligning the curriculum across the district does have adequate time allocated. Two vertical team meetings were set aside for elementary, middle, and high school teachers to meet within their content areas. Supporting the philosophy that curriculum work should be done K-12, these meetings allowed content area teachers to identify grade-specific content foci. Once the Colchester School District creates curriculum guides that are effectively coordinated and articulated, students will receive the appropriate instruction based on the appropriate grade-specific curriculum to allow students to incrementally work on and master 21st century skills.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 2 Indicator 6

Conclusions

While staffing levels are sufficient for implementing the curriculum and the school is able to offer a wide variety of courses, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library media center (LMC) inconsistently support the ability to fully implement the curriculum, including co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities.

The school's observable class size is an average of 21 students. This does not include non-academic periods, such as study halls, which can include more than 100 students. Teachers report that reductions in the budget have impacted curriculum. For example, Project Oceanology, a program used by all disciplines of science which provided students with authentic experiences in the physical, chemical, and biological components of the ocean, is no longer funded. The English and world languages departments reported that in some cases they do not have access to enough books. In terms of technology, all teachers have access to school-issued computers with access to the Internet, but beyond that, technology is inconsistent. In the science department, a 24-laptop mobile cart became outdated, resulting in the purchasing of thin-client and zero-client computing devices that limit the delivery of curriculum. For example, in physics, Vernier probes are not compatible with the computers and therefore cannot be used. The English department has a Chromebook cart and access to a computer lab that is shared among several departments, but computer access is not sufficient to meet curricular expectations, especially with a focus on writing. Teachers have purchased their own technology, such as televisions and video players, in order to meet the needs of curricula. Grants helped to purchase a reading program called Read-180, but the annual maintenance fee has been denied. The library media center (LMC) provides sufficient periodicals, online resources and databases to implement the curriculum. LMC staff, teachers, students and parents report that a wide range of materials is available, although there is concern that budget inconsistency limits the ability to improve and maintain resources and there is currently no certified library media specialist.

The facilities generally support the delivery of curriculum; however, some areas are inadequate. On the classroom level, the science teachers are able to follow the guidelines set forth by the National Science Teacher Association, and the labs are adequate for the types of experiments conducted. However, limitations exist for conducting experiments due to a lack of laboratory classrooms. The building has some issues which include problems with heating and cooling systems and some needed repairs to the roof, which sometimes force classes to relocate, impeding the delivery of curricula. In regard to co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities, the facility is mostly able to provide adequate support. The athletic director asserted that the gym provides adequate space for activities, but that there is a definite need for more playing fields to accommodate various athletic teams. Numerous sport teams (JV baseball and softball, boys' and girls' lacrosse, wrestling, freshman boys' and girls' basketball) must practice off-site. This incurs transportation costs and causes delays in practice times. The self-study reveals that the facility is mostly able to adequately support all school programs and that some suitable alternative space has been provided. For example, portable classrooms are used for textile and business classes.

Once the Colchester District and Bacon Academy provide adequate resources for instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center, the curricular and co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities, including 21st century learning expectations, will be implemented sufficiently.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- facility tour

- teachers
- central office personnel
- Endicott survey

Standard 2 Indicator 7

Conclusions

While the district provides adequate personnel to accomplish curriculum revision, the district inconsistently provides the school's professional staff with the time and financial resources needed for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research. The district hired a highly qualified director of teaching and learning who is responsible for the district's curriculum coordination and articulation. He directs the implementation of the curriculum review schedule, which has the dual purpose of supporting content areas in their curriculum development as well as projecting future curricular needs. Members of each content area department are given the opportunity and some time to be actively involved in ongoing curriculum development and review through their participation in department and PLC meetings. However, teachers report that the allotted time is insufficient to complete the stages of curriculum work and that the funding to provide release time for curricular work is insufficient. Although the faculty has utilized the expertise of appropriate faculty members to identify established best practices from current education research, the school does not consistently use specific research to evaluate, develop, and revise the curriculum. The school has been limited in its access to educational research in part because of the budgetary cuts to professional development opportunities, release time, and summer curriculum writing stipends. The school does not assess the 21st century learning expectations to inform curricular revisions. However, considerable efforts are being made within departments to use assessment data on content-specific skills to assist with curricular revisions. Several departments, most notably the English department, use Achieve3000 data to adjust instructional practices. Once the Colchester School District fully provides the school's professional staff with sufficient time and financial resources for curriculum evaluation, development, and revision, Bacon Academy will be able to ensure both growth for staff and enhanced student learning.

Sources of Evidence

- teacher interview
- teachers
- central office personnel
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 2 Commendations

Commendation

The recently revised curriculum documents that emphasize depth of understanding and application of knowledge through authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school

Commendation

The opportunity for students to extend their learning beyond the core courses through elective offerings

Commendation

The opportunity for students to participate in a variety of co-curricular experiences

Commendation

The five-year curriculum revision plan set forth by the director of teaching and learning

Commendation

The wealth of effective instructional practices observed in the taught curriculum

Standard 2 Recommendations

Recommendation

Develop, adopt, and implement a common curriculum format that includes the school's 21st century learning expectations and complete curriculum for all courses using this format

Recommendation

Ensure that the taught curriculum aligns with the written curriculum

Recommendation

Create cross-disciplinary connections within curricular documents

Recommendation

Expand vertical articulation between and among all content areas K-12

Recommendation

Ensure appropriate time and funding for curriculum development and revision

Standard 3 Indicator 1

Conclusions

Teachers' instructional practices are not yet formally examined to ensure consistency with the school's 21st century learning expectations, and the school has not yet clearly integrated its core values into the instructional program. The vast majority of the teachers are clearly familiar with the Bacon 10 and can reference a 21st century learning expectation when discussing an instructional strategy that has been employed. Teaching practices often support the school's 21st century learning expectations; however, there are limited overt references to them in daily instruction. Across the school, the Bacon 10 have been incorporated into syllabi, and teachers have sporadically identified them explicitly in assignments and assessments. Teachers often examine their practices through collaboration and peer review in departmental professional learning communities (PLCs). Once the school has clearly integrated its revised core values and the teachers continuously examine all instructional practices to ensure alignment with Bacon 10, students will benefit from a coherent instructional program.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student work
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 3 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Teachers' instructional practices generally support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Teachers' instructional practices sometimes include personalized strategies such as choice of texts to read and use of alternate texts based on ability. Teachers regularly meet with individuals and small groups of students to address individual learning needs. For example, English teachers facilitate individual writing conferences and literature circles. In the Alternative Energy science class, students choose the format of their culminating project that presents information on an alternative energy source to the class. Students in band receive small-group instruction for specific instruments with their instructor and then rejoin for whole-group instruction. In some grade 11 and grade 12 English classes, students have mid-quarter conferences with their instructor to get feedback on their individual progress towards class standards using the department rubrics.

Units and assessments frequently center on broad, meaningful essential questions; however, purposeful cross-disciplinary learning was only witnessed in 17 percent of the 47 classes visited. Specific opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning exist in courses like Science and Alternative Energy Technology; however, currently not all students experience cross-disciplinary learning.

Across the school, students are engaged as active and self-directed learners. Students are commonly engaged in hands-on projects, Socratic seminars, leadership roles, and flipped classes. Students are sometimes offered opportunities to choose the topic or format of performance assessments. Sixty-eight percent of students report having an opportunity to choose a topic of study that interests them. In Images of Women, an English elective, students are allowed to explore topics through a "lens" of their choice: biology, sociology, or literature. For their summative assessment, students complete a project where the medium and topic is up to them. The only requirements are that it reaches a larger community, warrants research, and has a presentational element. Similarly, all four years of English classes allow students to explore texts through a variety of essential questions, which students can select based on their interests. In Science and Alternative Energy Technology, students complete a project where they are able to choose a format to best display their learning. In both Video Production and Construction courses, the curriculum is project-based and choice-driven. Students must research their topics, plan them out, decide which tools and strategies will be necessary to complete the project, follow through to completion, and then adjust the outcome following teacher and peer review. For these assignments, the instructor works as a facilitator as students are engaged in their own learning experiences.

Instructional strategies often emphasize inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking, as particularly noted in social studies, English, and science. These departments show greater prevalence of individual and collaborative learning activities that ask students to think deeply and critically. Eighty-six percent of staff and seventy-six percent of parents agree that students are being challenged to engage in inquiry, problem solving, and higher-order thinking. In world language classes, students are active participants by exploring authentic consumer practices of various cultures in order to make inferences about cultural perspectives. In Contemporary Issues and other social studies courses, the instructors show news clips, videos, and documentaries and ask students to analyze controversial issues based on evidence. Students are also asked to take their knowledge and engage in real conversations with their peers. In geography and regional studies classes, students engage in inquiry-based research projects. For example, students investigate a European country and present it to the class through the context of a study abroad experience.

Across the school and at a variety of course levels, students extensively apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks. In band and choir, students are required to practice, progress, and ultimately perform their music to live audiences locally and across the country. In a pre-calculus class, students use graphing calculators to produce graphical, algebraic and/or numerical data to support problem solution claims. For example, students create graphs to show how female employment statistics are rising faster than male employment statistics are falling. In a past social studies class, students had the opportunity to tweet questions to journalists covering a round-table discussion in the United Kingdom that discussed governance in West Africa. Many students received answers to their questions within hours. In current United States History classes, students complete a month-long inquiry

project by designing their open-ended question, engaging with their peers and community members, directing their own learning through project-based activities, and presenting to their community. In both video production and construction, there are frequent authentic learning opportunities, as both programs accept requests for community resource projects. These projects include shed building for clubs and organizations, furniture building for sale and profit, video creation for school and community organizations, and advertisement creation for local businesses. They also complete various cross-curricular projects for other school programs, such as creating a bed of nails for physics, creating handicap ramp designs for math, building adaptable equipment for special needs students, and creating videos and websites for social studies and art.

Teachers frequently engage students in a variety of peer- and self-assessments and reflection, particularly in those classes implementing standards-based instruction. In world language classes, some students regularly use a self-assessment target sheet to check their progress on learning targets for the units. This provides an opportunity for students to refocus on the unit goals and determine where they may need extra work. At the end of units and quarters, students are asked to complete Google forms to reflect on their progress. A similar process is completed in some English classes as students complete quarterly summative assessments based on the department's identified priority standards. Before writing reports in science, students are provided with a rubric and a detailed list of information that needs to be included in a formal lab report. Students are encouraged to use the list as a self-assessment tool before they turn in their work so they are confident in their product. For all of the areas in Career and Technical Education (CTE), students self-assess their employability skills. They rate themselves in a number of areas such as work ethic, timeliness, and preparation. They are then given feedback from their instructors on the skills. Band and choral students are constantly being asked to adjust. For example, teachers give band and choral students feedback on pitch, intonation, rhythm, tempo, dynamics, articulation, and tone. Also, critique is an essential component to all visual art classes, including peer assessment and self-assessment. Students use self-assessment, self-reflection, peer recommendations, and teacher feedback to strengthen their work.

In several areas, technology is implemented and integrated in instruction, including the CTE classes, specific tasks in the English department such as the creation of podcasts, and the use of Google Classroom throughout the building; however, more purposeful and evidence-driven distribution of technology would allow all students to access technology meaningfully during instruction.

Once additional opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning and a greater range of personalized strategies are implemented, teachers' instructional practices will extensively support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- students
- department leaders

Standard 3 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Teachers often adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student using a variety of strategies. Within departments, teachers make use of and review formative assessments to help shape instruction, and most of the teachers who are using standards-based instruction provide students with specific feedback to help students improve. While these assessments are not yet used in ways that facilitate cross-teacher collaboration, at the individual teacher level they are used effectively to guide the day's lesson. These assessments are guiding whole-class decisions for teachers on how to proceed with lessons but are not yet informing teachers' practice on strategic differentiation at the student level.

Across the school, there is use of purposeful organized grouping to maximize student learning and to provide support. Students are often engaged in group tasks in which interdependent learning is the focus. There were examples of this seen, occasionally, across all subject areas. Teachers use data from formative assessments, benchmarks, and student performance on Achieve3000 to help shape instructional strategies. In some areas, such as social studies and English, teachers provide alternate texts for students. Occasionally assessments are adjusted based on student needs. There is occasional strategic differentiation of instructional strategies to specifically help individual students master concepts and skills. Many teachers use formative assessments during instruction to determine student needs and adjust instructional strategies in real time.

In some classrooms, teachers are effectively and frequently adjusting their instruction based on formative assessments and their knowledge of each student. Once this practice is shared and made universal school-wide, students will consistently benefit from these strategies.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students

Standard 3 Indicator 4

Conclusions

The vast majority of teachers improve their instructional practices individually and collaboratively. Across the school through PLCs and flex time, departments have regular, formal time to meet to review student achievement data from formative and summative assessments. Many content areas, notably social studies and English, are able to take advantage of common prep time to develop and revise common departmental rubrics and assessments. In some departments, teachers regularly meet within their content areas at department meetings and sometimes use this time to examine student work; however, teachers rarely meet across content areas. Teachers often reflect on feedback from a variety of sources. Parents regularly provide feedback at parent-teacher conferences, via an annual district survey, and at the Bacon Parent Council. Teachers occasionally gather feedback from students via student surveys. In certain departments, leaders frequently devote departmental and PLC time for teachers to share and discuss instructional improvement. Teachers extensively engage in professional discourse focused on instructional practice during PLCs and flex time. The school administrators have a reasonable number of teachers with whom to work and effectively implement the district's evaluation protocol. Teachers are offered useful feedback in a timely way. The school is currently examining research on mastery-based learning and a pilot is currently taking place. While this pilot is not yet fully understood by parents and the community at large, this project shows promise and a strong connection to current research in education. Because the vast majority of teachers improve their instructional practices, individually and collaboratively, students benefit from instruction of increasing quality.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- students
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 3 Indicator 5

Conclusions

Teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, collectively maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional strategies. During common planning time, flex time, and PLC time, teachers regularly reflect on feedback from colleagues and administrators in order to improve their content-specific instructional strategies. Through programs including the Groundbreakers, Innovation Nation, and the district-wide PLC focusing on researching instructional strategies, several teachers engage in research and attend programs designed to improve their instructional practices. The instructional practices learned through these activities are increasingly shared with colleagues through both in-district professional development and the digital toolkit. Teachers are encouraged to focus on a specific instructional strategy to develop during the school year as well as to observe their colleagues in the classroom. Because teachers maintain expertise in instructional practices, they have the requisite skills to deliver instruction designed to meet the needs of their students.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- teacher interview
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 3 Commendations

Commendation

The dissemination of instructional strategies and best practices through the use of the digital toolkit and in-district professional development

Commendation

The use of purposeful grouping throughout classes to meet the needs of students

Commendation

The frequent opportunities for students to apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks throughout the school and academic levels

Commendation

The engagement of students as active and self-directed learners throughout the school and academic levels

Standard 3 Recommendations

Recommendation

Collaborate between departments to create cross-curricular learning experiences for all students

Recommendation

Develop and implement a system to continuously examine and support teachers' instructional practices to ensure alignment with the Bacon 10 and the newly revised core values

Standard 4 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The professional staff does not yet employ a formal process to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations based on specific and measurable criteria for success, such as school-wide analytic rubrics. The school has developed the Bacon 10 as its 21st century learning expectations, but there is not yet a formal process in place for measuring student progress toward meeting these expectations. Furthermore, the school does not currently assess whole-school achievement of the Bacon 10. Students are not regularly assessed on individual progress and achievement of each of the Bacon 10 expectations. However, some departments have identified which Bacon 10 expectations are best connected to their discipline and include this information on content-specific rubrics. Once the school develops and implements a system to measure students' attainment of the skills found in the Bacon 10, students, families, and staff will be able to understand the degree to which each student and the school at large have demonstrated proficiency in these skills.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students

Standard 4 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The school's professional staff does not yet communicate individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to students and their families, nor the school's progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to the school community. Student progress regarding course-specific goals are communicated regularly; however, these communications are not explicitly aligned with student progress toward the 21st century learning expectations. At this time there are no analytic rubrics to measure the Bacon 10.

There is a plan to begin to measure the skills described in the Bacon 10 so that school staff will be able to communicate student progress toward 21st century learning expectations. These data will provide the students and staff the ability to modify instruction and curriculum to better prepare students to graduate with the necessary skills and abilities. The plan stipulates that the Class of 2024 will demonstrate achievement in each of the Bacon 10 expectations as a requirement for graduation. According to the the Bacon 10 timeline, a portfolio to monitor students' progress toward these expectations will be developed over the course of the next few years. Examination of these portfolios will provide information about students' exposure to each of the Bacon 10, and will likely require the use of school-wide rubrics for measurement. Once a measuring tool, such as analytic rubrics, is developed and fully implemented, communication of student progress toward achieving the Bacon 10 expectations can effectively be shared with students, families, and community.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students

Standard 4 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Professional staff frequently collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement. When possible, staff review and analyze data during formally allocated PLC times. Many staff utilize additional informal time, such as common preparatory periods in order to review data and adjust their instruction. This is achieved in a variety of ways because there is no formal data analysis protocol established throughout the school. For example, Achieve3000 data is used in English, social studies and science. These data have been used to create targeted lessons for students who are struggling with particular skills, such as vocabulary.

Many departments implement several benchmark assessments in a variety of courses. English and social studies use benchmark assessments three times a year. Benchmark data are analyzed and adjustments are made to instruction or the intended summative assessment. The effects of these changes are also analyzed to evaluate the success of the modifications made. The English department staff regularly provides strategic feedback on student drafts and adjusts their instruction based on trends they find during the review process. The math department analyzes PSAT data to inform instruction and curriculum.

Adjustments are made to address identified achievement gaps found in standardized and summative assessments. The math department found through reviewing data from their logarithm test that students who performed poorly were those who had not taken physics. With that, teachers adjusted their instruction to teach those necessary skills, and also made curriculum adjustments for future courses. School counselors often look at student grades to identify students in need of additional support.

According to the demographic information provided by the school, over 60 percent of students enrolled in AP/ECE courses are female. On the other hand, almost 60 percent of students enrolled in Level I courses are boys. Such disproportionalities are also apparent when other demographics are examined, such as special education status, ethnicity and free or reduced lunch status. There is little evidence that demographic data is examined when responding to inequities in student achievement. Because of the staff's commitment to analyzing data through informal methods, teachers are able to respond to inequities in student performance.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers

Standard 4 Indicator 4

Conclusions

Prior to each unit of study, teachers rarely communicate to students the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations but often communicate related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed. For the 2017-2018 academic year, all teachers were directed to include the Bacon 10 in their course syllabus. Teachers were further instructed to identify which Bacon 10 expectations best connect with their courses. Some teachers have identified which expectations are addressed in unit assessments or rubrics. However, these rubrics are content-specific and do not provide a direct measure of any Bacon 10 expectation.

At the beginning of a unit, many staff provide students with the unit-specific learning goals that will be assessed. This is accomplished through written and/or verbal explanations but with little or no reference to the Bacon 10. As students work through formative assessment, many teachers provide feedback to clarify learning goals. This is especially true for those courses that are piloting standards-based learning, where students work toward mastering course-specific learning expectations. In these courses, teachers spend a significant amount of time working with students to explain the learning objects. In biology classes, students are provided with a unit outline including a description of the laboratory work and the requirements of the summative assessment. This is similar to the Planning Calendar distributed to world languages students. While students in these courses will receive detailed information about what content will be covered and assessed, there is limited evidence of a clear link to the Bacon 10. The frequent use of content-specific rubrics provides students with information about what they will be learning; once this practice is expanded to include measurement of students' achievement of the Bacon 10, students will understand the degree to which they are achieving the school's learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- teachers
- students

Standard 4 Indicator 5

Conclusions

Prior to summative assessments, teachers often provide students with specific and measurable criteria for success, such as corresponding rubrics, which define targeted high levels of achievement. Teachers in most departments use a variety of methods to prepare students for summative assessments. For example, business communications, band, and physics teachers distribute analytic rubrics that clearly describe high-level expectations. Students can use the information in these analytic rubrics to prepare for the summative assessment, which also provides context for the feedback they will receive. Students in math courses receive study guides that provide specific topics and examples to illustrate the learning expectations for each unit. Teachers in English and social studies use an argumentative writing rubric formatively throughout the unit and again as the summative assessment. Students in these classes become familiar with the expectations by using the rubrics for self-reflection. While many teachers utilize analytic rubrics to assess summative assessments, some rubrics do not define targeted high levels of achievement and resemble a checklist of required elements that offer little feedback to students on how to improve performance. Because teachers at Bacon Academy provide students with specific and measurable criteria regarding how they are assessed, most students understand what they need to accomplish to achieve high levels of success.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- students

Standard 4 Indicator 6

Conclusions

In each unit of study, the vast majority of teachers employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments. It was clear from multiple stakeholders that a variety of ongoing assessments are used in many classrooms. Formative assessments are used at Bacon Academy to monitor student learning and appropriate adjustments are made to instruction and assessments. Such formative assessments include skills check, bell ringers/exit tickets, critiques, quizzes, and reflections. Some summative assessments used include performances, essays, tests, and written reflections to demonstrate knowledge. Many departments utilize common summative assessments.

While many teachers encourage students to rework their formative assessments, grading is inconsistent. In some classes, students are able to resubmit for a higher grade, while others may not receive a grade at all. The differences are stark between courses that are and are not participating in the mastery learning pilot. This currently leads to some confusion and concern on the part of parents with regard to how their children's course grades are constituted.

Often when students begin new assignments and projects they are provided with clear understandings of what they will be doing and how they will be assessed. This is conveyed through overviews, handouts, and introductory lessons. Additionally, students may be provided with exemplars of what teacher expect from students. In math classes, teachers are using the "Rule of 4" where students examine the problem through four different lenses: verbal, graphical, symbolic, and numeric. This gives teachers a more detailed look into the understanding, or misunderstandings, of individual students and groups. Students feel that their learning is supported through formative assessments and that their summative assessments accurately reflect their level of learning. With the utilization of a variety of formative and summative assessments, teachers are able to monitor and support student learning.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- student work
- teacher interview

Standard 4 Indicator 7

Conclusions

Teachers generally collaborate both formally and informally on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments. Teachers are provided some time to collaborate through the utilization of PLCs two times a month. Some departments also have common planning periods, but this does not always happen from year to year. The amount of PLC time has increased in recent years, and there is a plan to increase the time in the coming school year. Beyond this formal time, many teachers have taken it upon themselves to create necessary additional time, using their personal planning periods and time found outside of the school day. It is during both these formal and informal collaborative times that teachers create, analyze, and revise assessments, including common assessments. However, many staff indicate that their PLC time is often spent on other initiatives and administrative needs of the department.

Most staff review formative and summative assessment data and use them to efficiently monitor student learning. Students recognize that teachers adjust their instruction based on informal and formative assessment results. They often observe their teacher adjusting instruction within a class period or soon after. Teachers share many examples of how assessment data informs their instruction regularly. Teachers who share common assessments often analyze data collaboratively and adjust planned instruction and curriculum.

When the professional staff has time to collaborate on common assessments, it is purposeful and focused as evidenced through their use of results from the Achieve 3000 resource. This is also evident through developed benchmarks, such as those by the English, math, CTE, and art departments. The science department has created a common laboratory rubric, as well as common mid-year, final, and common assessments. Additionally, the English and social studies departments found commonalities with student assessment on their persuasive writing. They worked collaboratively to create a common rubric which is now used by both departments. This has provided students with clear and consistent expectations between the two departments.

Teachers regularly examine specific and measurable criteria for success to ensure student needs are being met. While time utilized to do this work varies, there is consistent evidence from the school staff and students to support that this happens. Once the school develops consistent collaboration time with clear and specific goals, teachers will improve their assessments, resulting in specific and clear ongoing feedback for improved student achievement.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers

Standard 4 Indicator 8

Conclusions

Many teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work. The school staff and students shared evidence that feedback is provided throughout the learning process. In English and social studies, teachers provide students with multiple opportunities to revise and resubmit their work before the work is formally assessed. However, the way that this is implemented varies from teacher to teacher. For example, some teachers assign an increasing value to each submission. The first draft does not count as a grade, but feedback is still provided. The next draft counts as a homework grade. After students receive feedback, they may be asked to reflect on their progress so far and make improvement goals. At other times, they will share strategies relating to common errors. The third submission, which is the final submission, is counted as a quiz grade.

In math classes, formative assessments give students a chance to apply new learning while providing the teacher with information about individual and whole-class progress. Teachers often give specific feedback based on errors seen in student work. Struggling students may receive focused instruction in future lessons to ensure that the feedback is understood and utilized. By the time students take a summative assessment, they will have had the opportunity improve their understanding of many types of problems. In classes that use detailed analytic rubrics rather than checklists, students benefit from more useful corrective and timely feedback. The use of Google Classroom also enhances teachers' ability to give specific corrective feedback. Because teachers provide students with multiple opportunities to review, revise, and improve their work, Bacon Academy helps ensure that students can successfully master course content.

Sources of Evidence

- teachers
- students
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 9

Conclusions

Teachers frequently use formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning. The use of formative assessments is purposeful and implemented regularly across most courses. However, the collaboration between teachers of common courses with the purpose of using formative assessments to make instructional changes is more sporadic. This is accomplished through the formal PLC work time, common planning, and informal avenues. The development and analysis is accomplished by teachers through formal and informal time. Examples of formative assessments include bell work, worksheets, class discussions, skills checks, and exit slips. Staff regularly use this feedback and data to adjust instruction. Students are able to articulate that teachers regularly make adjustments during and after daily instruction. Because the teachers are consistently utilizing formative assessment to inform and modify their instruction, students' needs are being monitored and addressed.

Sources of Evidence

- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- department leaders

Standard 4 Indicator 10

Conclusions

Teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, regularly examine student work and common course and grade-level assessments, for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice; staff sporadically use data from standardized assessments; data from progress toward 21st century learning expectations and data from sending schools, receiving schools, and post-secondary institutions are not currently used for these purposes.

Different types of student work are reviewed by teachers and departments in a variety of ways. Individual teachers use strategies such as exit quizzes, bell work, and content checks to gauge student understanding and immediately address issues. In some courses the review of common assessments leads to changes in curriculum or modifications to instruction. In particular, freshman English teachers noticed a deficiency in the manner in which students used quotations in a benchmark assessment. Teachers researched strategies and tried several new methods of instruction in their classes. Eventually, the "They Say, I Say" strategy was adopted. The success of this strategy has carried over to the social studies department, where some teachers report using in their classrooms.

Data from standardized assessments, such as PSAT, SAT, AP are available to administrators and teachers to inform curriculum and instruction. There is limited evidence that this data is used to modify curriculum, but teachers in science, math, English and social studies have used SAT data to assess the success of their programs. The math department, for example, has expanded its course offerings to meet demonstrated needs highlighted through SAT data.

The counseling department has developed and utilized exit survey for students. There are plans for a system to facilitate the use of data from the middle school, but there is no evidence that data from these sources guide curriculum or instruction. Because progress toward the school's 21st century learning expectations is not measured, no data is available to direct focused changes.

Once the school uses its many positive individual examples of course-level student assessment to create a system that also tracks students' achievement of the school-wide 21st century learning expectations, students and parents will have a clear vision of how students are progressing in meeting these goals.

Sources of Evidence

- teachers
- department leaders
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 11

Conclusions

The school has not yet stated or formalized beliefs about learning; thus, although grading and reporting practices are reviewed and revised in a limited manner, they cannot be aligned to beliefs about learning in a way that unifies teachers and departments across the school.

While some grading and reporting practices have been reviewed at Bacon Academy, it has not been done with a focus on the Bacon 10 or the school's core values. Additionally, there has not been the opportunity to review and discuss the school's grading practices school-wide. However, there is a plan for the coming school year for school staff to develop an agreed-upon philosophy around grading. Once this is established, the school staff will formally review current grading practices and expectations and align them to their philosophy. The professional staff does not review the school's grading practices to ensure a balanced approach to formative, summative, and common assessments.

In recent years there have been committees working to address elements of grading and reporting. Specifically, this has been focused on the weight homework may have in course grades, rigor in an honors distinction, and expectations for entering grades into PowerSchool. There are a few teachers implementing standards-based grading practices in some classes. This work has encouraged changes to traditional grading and reporting practices. However, some of these changes are inconsistent between classes.

With no explicit grading philosophy, there is no process that the staff follows to ensure consistent grading practices across all subjects, with the exception of how much weight homework may play in a course grade. Therefore grading practices are not consistent across curricular areas. Once the school clearly articulates its beliefs about learning, it will be able to develop and implement a philosophy around grading and reporting practices that is aligned to the school's core values and beliefs.

Sources of Evidence

- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- teachers
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Commendations

Commendation

The use of analytic rubrics by departments and individual teachers to evaluate summative assessments

Commendation

The use of formative and summative assessments to support student learning and adapt instruction

Commendation

Teachers' willingness to collaborate informally when formal time for such is currently insufficient

Commendation

The consistent feedback provided to students in monitoring their learning and adjusting instruction

Commendation

The practice of communicating related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed

Commendation

The provision of PLC time two times per month to collaborate both formally and informally on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments

Standard 4 Recommendations

Recommendation

Develop and implement a formal process to assess and communicate whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations

Recommendation

Ensure that students are given regular opportunities to meet the school's 21st century learning expectations

Recommendation

Ensure that time dedicated to PLCs is focused on improved teaching and learning

Recommendation

Create and implement a clear philosophy of grading and reporting

Standard 5 Indicator 1

Conclusions

Across the school, there is a conscious and continued effort to build a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all.

The core values of respect, responsibility, achievement, safety, and compassion are high priorities at Bacon Academy. Clubs such as Diversity Club, Peer Advocacy League, and Gay Straight Alliance reach out and teach students respect for others. Eighty-one percent of students feel that clear rules and norms are established to handle physical altercations that may arise; the student/parent handbook spells out offenses and rules in detail. There is a security person on duty daily. The assistant principal reports that this year student expulsions have doubled from three to six; the assistant principal was concerned that the trend was on the upward swing. Seventy-five percent of students feel safe, and 86 percent of parents and 84 percent of teachers feel the school provides a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture. The principal calls an assembly when major issues arise to ensure that students and staff are well informed and feel safe. By offering diverse clubs and opportunities, clear-cut expectations for rules and behavior, and frequent communication, Bacon Academy exhibits a safe, positive, respectful, and shared culture for staff, students, and parents.

Sources of Evidence

- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- central office personnel
- Endicott survey
- school website

Standard 5 Indicator 2

Conclusions

In some areas of the school, Bacon Academy is equitable and inclusive, ensuring access to academic experiences for all students, making certain that courses throughout the curriculum are populated with students reflecting the diversity of the student body, fostering heterogeneity, and supporting the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

In support of the expectation that students achieve through hard work and resilience, opportunities exist for students to take challenging coursework. Approximately 50 options for college credit courses exist along with 17 Advanced Placement options and students are encouraged to take them.

Students in the alternative education program, Soar, are included in mainstream classes to the greatest extent possible. The Soar staff expects that students work to be successful in the least restrictive settings before receiving additional support in the resource rooms. Where possible, problems of emotional instability are addressed in the main building to ensure a smooth transition back to class as the first option. Students are discouraged from going to the Soar program if efforts have not been made to address the unresolved area of frustration or anxiety. When developing the master schedule, Soar staff had input in the special education human resource distribution to ensure adequate support in core classrooms. Issues with students are addressed as social/emotional needs as opposed to behavioral defiance. Staff tend to support students in the classroom. The number of students, thirteen, allows for the staff of five to support them inclusively.

There is some disproportionality of student demographic representation in higher level courses. In a review of English 11 courses, of the 19 students that identify as Hispanic, African American, Asian, or Native American, 14 students, (76 percent) are in the lower level of the course. Conversely, 94 students (57 percent) that classified themselves as White are in level 3 or AP courses. Similarly, 22 out of 26 students (85 percent) with IEPs in grade 11 are enrolled in the lower level 1 or 2 English 11 sections despite the anecdotal information that many students have emotional rather than academic needs. A review of the participation of students receiving free or reduced lunch in English 11 show that only 36 percent of these students are currently enrolled in a level 3 or AP section. Similar disproportionality exist when looking at gender with females making up a disproportionately large portion of the rosters of the most rigorous courses.

Students or families who look to challenge a class level recommendation must go through a process of filling out an override request by early May. Students that receive an override are told that they are not eligible for SRBI support. This limits the support available to students who want to be challenged, and with further analysis, may be generalized to students from underperforming groups. Other supports, such as the academic center and after school teacher support are available. However, some teachers and students have reported lower expectations in class for students who are "overrides."

No plan exists to further examine access and equity in courses at Bacon Academy based on demographics such as gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, special education status. While the subgroups are a small percentage of students, students are aware of the differences in class enrollment based on demographic indicators. Once Bacon Academy establishes a process for ensuring equitable and inclusive access to and support in its most challenging courses, making sure that all classes reflect the diversity and heterogeneity of the school, then all students will be supported in the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- student shadowing
- panel presentation

- facility tour
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- school support staff

Standard 5 Indicator 3

Conclusions

There is both a formal and informal program or process 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. As demonstrated in the Endicott survey, 60 percent of students and 78 percent of staff feel that there is an adult who has a connection to each student. Through the advisory program, most faculty members are assigned to a group of 12-14 students, who meet twice a month. The assistant principal has compiled lessons for each advisory session. Next year, the Bacon 10 will be gradually embedded into each session. In addition to advisory, students have the opportunity to form student-teacher relationships in the academic lab, many after-school clubs and activities, the Soar program, and the life skills program. Across the school, students have extensive opportunities to make connections with staff at Bacon Academy benefiting the overall learning environment and school climate.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- teacher interview
- students
- Endicott survey

Standard 5 Indicator 4

Conclusions

In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff regularly engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning, use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices, dedicate formal time to implement professional development, and apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. However, because the school lacks clearly stated beliefs about learning, these development opportunities are currently more anecdotal in nature rather than unified around the school's core values and beliefs.

Although staff have the opportunity to meet informally for discussions, formal meeting time is limited. Every other Friday has a designated half hour delayed opening for teacher meetings. Each department meets twice a month to discuss and analyze curriculum, evaluate course content and pacing, and work on exams in PLCs (professional learning communities), but staff report that often this time is pre-determined by the administration. However, only one Wednesday after school twice a year is allocated to TLCs (teacher learning communities). Some staff are also given opportunities to participate in Student Learning Expeditions (SLEs) with members of central office and administrators, where they are given a chance to visit and learn from other teachers in classes. Teachers benefit from frequent development opportunities given both in-house by colleagues and regular opportunities to travel to state-level and regional workshops.

Once the school adopts beliefs about learning and unifies its professional development activities around them, teachers will benefit from a stronger sense of purpose and usefulness in the collaboration and PD time.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- school website

Standard 5 Indicator 5

Conclusions

By design, school leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning. The professional development and evaluation plan demonstrates multiple measures for assessing teacher performance and guiding professional learning targets. The evaluation system is aligned to the learning expectations established by the Bacon 10, with teachers required to align their professional goals to at least one expectation. This alignment connects the learning expectations to the actionable goals teachers set for the year. The evaluation system aligns with research on best practices for evaluation and support and closely aligns to the state guidelines. Appropriate training has taken place to ensure that evaluation rubrics outcomes are evidence based.

There are conversations among leaders at Bacon on how to equitably distribute the caseload of teacher observations so that each leader has a pulse of all teachers in the building over the three-year cycle. Further, teachers felt that there is some inconsistency in evaluations, so their plan to spread the informal observations will be well received.

In addition, informal classroom visits, Student Learning Expeditions, and common Tier 1 instructional topics at staff meetings ensure adequate non-evaluative processes that enhance the student learning.

The administrative team has established a method to monitor the implementation progress of the evaluation plan. In doing so it ensures that the plan can serve as a tool for growth and not be rushed at the end toward the deadlines. It also promotes transparent communication with staff on the schedule of observation in order to align professional learning targets to scheduled observations. As a result of school leaders regularly using research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning, teacher and student growth is achieved.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- department leaders
- school leadership

Standard 5 Indicator 6

Conclusions

The organization of time somewhat supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning of all students. Advisory period has evolved from a disconnected and inconsistently implemented time in the schedule to a time with a clearer plan using lessons available online. Twice per month, the start of the instructional day is delayed to provide thirty minutes of time for teacher collaboration. Teachers meet in whole-staff, department-level, and interdepartmental groups to discuss a variety of pertinent topics and to analyze student achievement data.

Block scheduling allows for an increase in real-life problem solving and higher level thinking activities. For example, the exploration of document based questions, use of performance tasks with roller coasters in math, or the classification exercise observed in student classes would not be possible in 40-50 minute classes. In a review of 47 classrooms, 60 percent of the classrooms exhibited medium to higher order thinking skills for an extended period of time, 64 percent had at least some inquiry work, and 80 percent of the classes had students that were engaged in self-directed learning. Clearly, the organization of the schedule promotes higher level activities and time for students to engage in the content in deeper ways.

All of these benefits notwithstanding, professional collaboration is not yet sufficient to fully support the school's core values and expectations for learning. Professional learning communities (PLCs), are underway with various levels of success by departments. The district has engaged in creating a greater focus on establishing a coherent system. Bacon Academy does not yet have common expectations, templates, or rubrics to evaluate the success of the PLC process or its impact on student achievement.

While the schedule provide good opportunities for research-based instructional practices, once the organization of time at Bacon Academy better provides for meaningful collaboration among teachers, students will benefit from even stronger pedagogy and curriculum.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- department leaders
- school leadership

Standard 5 Indicator 7

Conclusions

In most areas, student load and class size enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students. Class sizes average 17 students in the core areas, with labs slightly lower at 14. However, recently cut sections led to increased class size in higher level courses. Currently, forty-five classes have 26 or more students, totaling over 9 percent of all classes. Of the 14 classes with 30 or more students, eight are core academic classes. Conversely, 83 classes have fewer than 12 students (20 percent). Once the school examines and addresses class size variability, teachers will be better able to meet the learning needs of individual students.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 5 Indicator 8

Conclusions

The principal, working with other building leaders, extensively provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the core values and learning expectations. The principal is visible in the school and visits classrooms regularly. He provides positive feedback to teachers to promote effective practices and maintains a positive can-do attitude. Recently, the principal has chosen to highlight academic success in students as equally or more important than athletic success, which historically has been the focus. He spends ample time in the classrooms and staff meetings focus on teaching and learning. In the meeting schedule and minutes reviewed, time with staff included a review of strategies to engage students, Tier 1 feedback from teachers, and discussions on core values.

The principal engages with students and faculty in decision making, and the organizational design of the staff demonstrate its systemic nature of shared responsibility. School-wide committees are designed by departments or needs, such as school climate and school leadership teams. Professional learning communities are also established and will be improved when there is more coherent implementation. Department leaders meet regularly with the principal, as does the union representative on a monthly basis. No formal union grievance has been filed at Bacon Academy in at least ten years. Because the principal leads by building the capacity of other building leaders and teachers, he extensively provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the core values and learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership

Standard 5 Indicator 9

Conclusions

Teachers, students, and parents are extensively involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership. The twice monthly meeting of the Bacon Leadership Committee, led by the principal and consisting of department representatives, the librarian, the literary specialist, and both assistant principals, shares the process of decision-making with all parties involved. In addition, shared decision-making by faculty in writing each of the Bacon 10 statements ensured ownership of the document. Feedback from parents, students, community members, and business leaders as well as the board of education made this document a total community project. Additionally, faculty, staff, students, and parents were involved in the interview and selection process when hiring both assistant principals and an athletic coach. Parents report that the principal holds Bacon Parent Council every month. He contacts parents via Digital Backpack and Twitter, but even with the knowledge of an impending meeting, fewer than a dozen parents regularly attend. Over half of teachers and parents report that they are adequately involved in decision-making at Bacon Academy. Because teachers, students, and parents are extensively involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making, there is an increased sense of shared responsibility and ownership.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- parents
- Endicott survey

Standard 5 Indicator 10

Conclusions

Teachers often exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase student engagement in learning. This is evident in the professional involvement of teachers in the curriculum review process and the three Bacon Academy teachers on the district professional development and evaluation committee. A common theme is that teachers creatively find ways to provide students with opportunities despite budgetary challenges. An example of this is the development of “earned honors” classes in Asian Studies and Contemporary Issues courses in the social studies department. To make up for the loss of an honors section in these courses, teachers provided students with opportunities to receive honors credit with additional extension of the core curriculum in a college preparatory course. This innovative option provides more challenge for students who would otherwise be in a more challenging class.

Teachers are actively engaged in seeking additional grant funds to promote innovative programming. Significant career and technical education grants (Perkins, for example) sought by Bacon teachers have improved the CTE programming and have resulted in statewide rankings in CTE competitions, with many of the programs ranking in the top ten in the state. Other grants, such as the Common Core grant, have allowed teachers to receive much needed resources in order to increase opportunities for success for students. This leadership and initiative is evident in the interaction with students also. There are over 40 student clubs with faculty advisors; in several cases staff members volunteer their time to serve in this role. Students share that teachers are always trying to help them do well in school and are available for anything they need. As a result of teachers exercising initiative and leadership, they help to provide an environment that increases student engagement and success.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- school board
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 11

Conclusions

The board of education, superintendent, and principal are always collaborative, reflective, and constructive in their professional relationship. The superintendent and school board support the rollout of the Bacon 10. Additionally, the superintendent and principal have collaborated to successfully present to the school board a proposal to accept tuition students from Norwich. The program moved forward and was seen as a benefit to Bacon Academy and the district. The board of education conducts itself appropriately; keeping an eyes-on but hands-off approach to governance and appropriately maintaining focus on budget, curriculum, and policy. Because the school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive, students are able to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- school board
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

Standard 5 Indicator 12

Conclusions

Across the school, the school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school. Board representatives expressed confidence in the school administration and teaching staff. They communicated their role in selecting the building leader and assigning the responsibility of the daily operation of the school to the principal. The school board members view the administration at Bacon Academy as fully engaged and able to follow district policies and work well with students and teachers. Therefore, the support of the building principal by the school board and superintendent ensures that the principal can carry out the responsibilities necessary to lead the school effectively.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- school board

Standard 5 Commendations

Commendation

The conscious and continued efforts to build a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all

Commendation

The visibility and involvement of the principal and assistant principals in their efforts to cultivate a culture of continuous growth

Commendation

The multiple opportunities for students to take challenging Advanced Placement or college credit-bearing courses

Commendation

The multiple opportunities for students to engage in extracurricular activities after school

Commendation

The collaboration and partnership between and among the students, teachers, administrators, central office, superintendent, and school board

Commendation

The formal and informal programs in the school through which each student has an adult in the school who knows the student well

Commendation

The use of research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning by school leaders

Commendation

The instructional leadership of the principal that is rooted in the school's core values and learning expectations

Commendation

The opportunities for teachers to exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase student engagement in learning

Standard 5 Recommendations

Recommendation

Address and remediate demographic inequities in student participation in higher level courses

Recommendation

Establish clear protocols and implementation benchmarks for PLC meetings to ensure that teacher collaboration time is focused on students' achievement of the 21st century learning expectations

Recommendation

Correct any school-wide practices that exclude students from SRBI, intervention, or academic support

Standard 6 Indicator 1

Conclusions

Although the school has pervasively embedded timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, the school does not yet measure each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

At the Tier 1 level, teachers are responsive to student concerns and contact support staff as needed. Teachers implement classroom-based interventions prior to referral to the Scientifically Research Based Interventions (SRBI) or student-teacher assistance team (STAT). A math lab staffed by certified teachers and a writing lab are available to all students throughout the day. There is also a grant-funded after-school academic support program for students at risk for failing. For students requiring Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports, there is a two-pronged referral process which includes STAT and SRBI for students with social/emotional and/or academic concerns, respectively. However, the STAT and SRBI referral process does not yet take into account a student's learning gaps in relation to the Bacon 10 because the school has not yet developed rubrics to measure students' attainment of 21st century learning expectations. The STAT and SRBI teams meet weekly to review referrals and student data and to develop intervention strategies. Interventions are tiered in alignment with the SRBI model and include either a reading instructor and/or math paraprofessionals who work with students one-on-one. SRBI utilizes the Achieve3000 program to establish Lexile levels to match interventions with student needs.

Students who are identified as needing special education and/or a 504 attend learning strategies or learning labs for specialized instructions. More intensive interventions include referral to programs for students with an IEP and designation of emotionally disturbed (Soar program), life skills, alternative education, and resiliency programs. Students who are designated as English language learners (ELL) are supported by a district staff member who meets with the small number of identified ELL students every other day. The ELL teacher also provides consultation to teachers, allowing differentiation to support the ELL students' access to the curriculum. Support services staff in conjunction with school administrators and teachers serve as members of both the STAT and SRBI teams, which ensures coordinated services. Additionally, the district social worker, substance abuse counselor, and school psychologist meet weekly in a collaborative meeting to discuss student issues.

Once Bacon Academy has developed a measure to effectively assess students' achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations, the school community can be assured that students receive targeted supports that promote successful academic progress.

Sources of Evidence

- facility tour
- teachers
- students
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 6 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The school provides frequent information to families, especially those most in need, about available student support services. Bacon Academy posts weekly updates through Digital Backpack on the school's website and frequently uses Twitter to communicate information about school programming and services. The school counseling department utilizes Naviance to provide students and their families with information about college and careers, resume writing, college applications, and post-high school plans. The library media center (LMC) provides information about library services to faculty, staff, and students and their families on their website. Bacon Academy hosts an evening in the spring for parents of 8th grade students in which parents are presented with information about the LMC. The school counseling department hosts information session on post-secondary planning such as Financial Aid Night. The school social worker holds a parent support group meeting twice a month centered around social and emotional well-being. Colchester Cares (C2), comprised of the director of pupil services, school social workers and psychologists from each of the district's four schools, and various community stakeholders, meets monthly to discuss an avenue for reaching families in the schools and communities who may be struggling. The district sends information home in mailers to families who have indicated that they do not receive digital communications. The district conducts a bi-annual survey of all families of students who receive special education and 504 services. The school counseling department uses parent usage data from Naviance to identify parents who are not accessing the service and mails these families letters with access information. Students complete an exit survey in Naviance upon graduation. The LMC collects data about library and material usage and uses the data to make budgetary decisions. Bacon Academy's plethora of communication strategies ensure that families, especially of students most in need, are provided with the necessary information about available student support services to assist in their children's learning.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- parents
- school support staff

Standard 6 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Support services staff often use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student. PowerSchool is used to provide information to students and their families about grades. It is also used to track information on student attendance, behavior, and medical alerts. The counseling department uses Naviance to follow students' credit attainment and progress with post-secondary planning. IEP Direct is used for all 504 and special education IEPs. The reading specialist uses Achieve3000 LevelSet tests and Renaissance Learning's online reading test to assess students' reading abilities. Odysseyware, an online course program, is used by students, including special education students, to earn class credits. Students enrolled in learning lab and learning strategies have access to some desktop computers and laptops. The library media center houses two computer labs for student and class use, as well as Chromebook carts. The alternative education program has desktop computers and Internet access in both classrooms. The Soar program has limited computer access. Support services' access to dependable wireless Internet is limited. The support services staff's effective use of technology frequently contributes to students' ability to access an effective range of coordinated services to meet their learning needs.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 6 Indicator 4

Conclusions

Bacon Academy's school counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel; however, counseling services are not consistently delivered to all students. Students and families are referred to area community and mental health agencies and social service providers on an as-needed basis. The school counseling department uses a wide variety of ongoing, relevant assessment data to identify student concerns and meet the needs and improve services for all students. However, the department does not currently utilize formal feedback from the community and a clear plan to ensure that each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

School counselors meet infrequently with all students and frequently with the highest need students individually and/or in groups to provide academic, career, and college counseling services. Counselors meet regularly with the students who have the highest need. Currently the way in which they manage their schedules is not allowing an ability to see all students on a more regular basis. Although there is enough staff to maintain expected student caseloads, administrative tasks and other duties assigned to the school counselors play a role in counselors ability to provide comprehensive services to all students. Counselors are responsible for covering lunch duty, setting up initial planning and placement team meetings (PPT), managing testing programs, and overseeing the dual enrollment program/ECE program.

The school counseling department utilizes a range of ongoing relevant assessment data to identify students at risk for not meeting academic expectations and improve services. Naviance is used for data collection, exit surveys, classroom lessons, and alumni tracking. Counselors look at SAT trends, student grades, failure lists, attendance, to identify students with academic concerns. Although school counselors communicate with their constituents through a variety of means, they do not currently collect feedback or use data to improve services.

Twitter and the school's Digital Backpack are two examples of how the school counseling department shares important information with students related to college planning and academic updates. Although there are a range of services listed on a department calendar and in the written curriculum, the school counseling department does not currently share the services that are offered with parents and students effectively. The school counseling curriculum was last revised in 2014 and is aligned to the ASCA National Standards from 2004.

Once the school counseling department refocuses on its core mission and allocates its time and energy to meeting the needs of all students, counselors will be able to offer a comprehensive developmental guidance program that supports students in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school website

Standard 6 Indicator 5

Conclusions

Bacon Academy's health services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who often provide preventative health and direct intervention services; use an appropriate referral process; and conduct ongoing student health assessment; however, they do not yet use feedback from the school community to improve services.

The health suite at Bacon Academy has adequate space and is designed to allow for privacy and confidential meetings with students. Bacon Academy's health services conduct preventative screenings on blood pressure, vision, hearing, and posture. In order to support students' emotional needs, health services monitor student visitors for symptoms of anxiety; the staff utilizes relaxation techniques with the students and contacts the school psychologist, social worker, or school counselor. The health services department offers outside counseling and resources information to families as needed. The health services website provides pertinent information on flu shots/prevention, immunization, concussion protocol, board of education medical policies and forms. The school nurse is a member of STAT, the Bacon Academy Climate Committee, the district health and safety committee, and attends any mandated 504 and PPT meetings. The health services department uses the School Nurse Assistance Program (SNAP) to document student visits and records and collaborates with outside providers as needed. In attending to students' physical and mental health, health services make students' ability to meet the school's 21st century learning expectations more attainable.

Because Bacon Academy's health services has an adequate number of certified personnel, a well-appointed health suite, and an appropriate referral process for physical and mental health, the community can be assured that all students have access to comprehensive health care.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 6 Indicator 6

Conclusions

Library/media services are informally integrated into curriculum and instructional practices by the two paraprofessionals who currently staff the library media center (LMC); Bacon Academy does not currently have a certified library media specialist. The LMC, described as the “hub” of Bacon Academy, provides students with access to a range of materials, including e-books, online databases, and the Destiny library catalog system. The LMC houses two computer labs for student and class use. The two paraprofessionals who staff the LMC ensure that it is open daily before, during, and after school. The LMC staff provides guidance to students and teachers on how to use the center's online databases. They host a “book tasting” event for all ninth grade students to inform them about materials and services the LMC provides.

The paraprofessionals collaborate with the school principal on budgetary needs and with library media specialists at other schools in the district on review of current materials. In addition, the paraprofessionals collect data on LMC usage by students and teachers, and on materials usage. The paraprofessionals use the data to make decisions about replacing materials and other budgetary needs. However, the unfilled library media specialist position inhibits Bacon Academy's ability to integrate library media services into the curriculum. The position is currently vacant as a result of a budget-related hiring freeze at the onset of the school year. Bacon Academy's school leadership team is currently in the process of reviewing candidates for the library media specialist position.

When the library media specialist position is filled and a curriculum aligned to Bacon 10 has been developed, students' ability to meet the school's 21st century learning expectations will be better supported by the LMC's resources.

Sources of Evidence

- facility tour
- students
- school leadership
- school support staff

Standard 6 Indicator 7

Conclusions

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 on a regular basis collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff to provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students. However, there are not currently department practices to utilize feedback from the community to improve services or a clear plan to ensure that each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Bacon Academy provides a wide range of staff and services that support identified students. Many of the services are embedded into the mainstream, and some support students with a more individualized program. Students with an IEP have access to learning labs and learning strategies courses which are supported directly by special education teachers and paraprofessionals. Students are also supported in the mainstream through co-teaching in English and geometry classes and para-supported classrooms as mandated by students' IEPs. Three additional programs support students who have more significant needs. Bacon Academy has a Soar program for students with an IEP who have emotional disabilities, an alternative education program for students who have been unable to succeed in the mainstream environment, and a resiliency program for students who have school avoidance issues. There is also a life skills program that serves students with intellectual disabilities. Students are supported by a school psychologist, three social workers, seven special education teachers, eight paraprofessionals, one speech/language pathologist, a district ELL teacher, a behavior consultant, a grant-funded substance abuse counselor, and a career-to-work teacher. Students with a 504 Plan are supported by the school counselors and regular education teachers. Students with a 504 Plan can access the learning support classrooms if their plans indicate the need. Support staff collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other staff in order to provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students. The majority of students at Bacon Academy benefit from these inclusionary practices; however, class sizes vary significantly depending on the schedule. These discrepancies in class size have an impact on support classroom sizes and student learning. The school utilizes student assessment data from the program Achieve 3000 to determine Lexile levels. This data assists regular education and special education teachers in matching learning materials with student needs, providing a collaborative data-informed process that supports student success. Although the community is surveyed every two years about support services in the district, and seniors and their parents complete an exit survey, the support services personnel at Bacon Academy do not currently review the feedback to improve learning for identified students or to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. Because Bacon Academy support services provide timely, collaborative, and varied supports, the community can be assured that all students receive inclusive learning opportunities to support their attainment of 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders

Standard 6 Commendations

Commendation

The range of timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students

Commendation

The comprehensive physical and mental health services for students provided by the school

Commendation

The Soar, alternative education, and life skills programs' individualized and targeted services which meet the needs of specific students

Commendation

The library media center facility's availability to students before, during, and after the school day

Commendation

The frequent information provided to families, especially those most in need, about available student support services

Commendation

The use of technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student

Standard 6 Recommendations

Recommendation

Hire a certified library media specialist

Recommendation

Solicit and use feedback from the school community to improve support services in order to ensure that each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations

Recommendation

Revise and implement a written comprehensive developmental school counseling program aligned to current standards that ensures that all students benefit from personal, academic, and career and college services to ensure that each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations

Standard 7 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The community and district's governing body provide sufficient funding for a wide range of school programs and services; however, the community support is currently inconsistent in providing dependable funding for the implementation of sufficient technology, staffing needs, professional development, curricular revisions and extended learning opportunities for the students of Bacon Academy.

Funding has been cut for school programs such as Project Oceanology, and less than 50 percent of school clubs and activities are funded. Classroom materials, including books and technology, have also been sporadically funded. Occasionally, teachers must schedule technology-enhanced lessons around the availability of the shared Chromebook carts. Some older technology equipment is not reliable and at times impedes the implementation of lessons due to availability and needs of repairs. For example, SMARTBoards and science probes do not have the ability to work with the recently implemented "thin client" desktop computers. This affects the ability to increase 21st century learning expectations for the students at Bacon Academy. Security system technology is also an area of concern as some of the security cameras are outdated and need to be updated.

Some staff positions at Bacon Academy have gone unfilled for the current 2017-2018 school year. This includes a library media specialist, a position that is currently supplemented by two full-time paraprofessionals. Current school enrollment at Bacon Academy stands at 800 which includes tuition students from neighboring Norwich. This program is expected to continue and will provide the additional monies to the general education fund and not be directly included in the budget for Bacon Academy. Professional development funding has been reduced in recent years, impacting the work of the teaching staff in their efforts provide updated instruction and skills for students related to 21st century skills. There has been sufficient professional development through the implementation of professional learning communities; however, professional development around technology is inconsistent and unclear to the majority of the teaching staff.

The governing body's level of funding is generally sufficient to allow students to fulfill the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- teachers
- school board
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Bacon Academy develops, plans, and funds programs to ensure the maintenance of the building and consistently funds repairs to the building and school plant. In collaboration with the director of educational operations and the custodial staff at Bacon Academy, the school develops, plans, and funds programs to ensure the maintenance of the school building and plant. This work includes preventative maintenance and repair along with properly maintaining, cataloging and replacing equipment to keep the school clean and operational on a daily basis. Furthermore, a strategic plan has recently been developed and has started to be implemented to invest more money into the school to replace blinds and the carpeting throughout the school building and to set aside capital funds each year to be used for extensive needs that might arise in the future, such as the roof or parking lots. Relationships have been established with outside vendors that support this process and provide reliable service to the school building and plant. Scattered heating and cooling issues remain within certain areas of the school building regarding the regulation of appropriate temperatures during the summer and winter months, which impact staff and student comfort. The custodial staff ensures that the school clean on a daily basis. Hence, Bacon Academy's overall development, planning, and funding of programs ensure the preventive and responsive maintenance of the building and provide a safe and functional learning environment.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- facility tour
- teachers
- students

Standard 7 Indicator 3

Conclusions

The community funds and the school implements a formal long-range plan for facility needs and capital improvements; however, there are no formal long-range plans to address programs and services, or enrollment changes and staffing needs, and the formal plan for technology is being developed but has not yet been implemented.

The school has long-range plans for facility needs and capital improvements, which have been supported by a budget that has been increased and maintained in recent years. This plan is being implemented, most notably with the funds secured to begin updating the carpet and blinds throughout the building as well as the ability to create reserve funds for expensive needs that might arise in the future.

While the school provides a variety of programs and services, budget restrictions, both planned for and imposed by state cuts, have impacted the extent of the offerings within school programs and services. Department leaders report that some budget reductions have impacted instruction. For example, in a science class that performs pig dissections as an essential aspect of the curriculum, the budget only covers a fraction of the resources needed for the implementation of the program. Thus, student access to experiential learning and 21st century skills is limited at times by the development and implementation of the budget.

This is compounded by the lack of consistent funding for technology needs. The district has created a draft of a formal five-year Digital Conversion Technology Plan. This plan includes a variety of roll-out phases and a replacement plan for devices. Specific costs have been included in this plan and in the budget, but the budget is currently pending so funds have not been confirmed yet. To date, funding for technology has been inconsistent and is often cut during budget negotiations. For example, a Chromebook cart for the English department, and improvements in the auditorium technology for the visual and performing arts program were initially budgeted for, but eventually cut. Teachers often acquire technology they need for their programs through grants, fundraisers, or personal funds. Formal long-term plans to fund and implement facility needs and capital improvements enable Bacon Academy to successfully provide a functional environment for students and staff, beginning the work to support achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Once the district funds and implements its technology plan, and develops, funds, and implements long-term plans for programs and services and enrollment changes and staffing needs, it will provide a learning environment and infrastructure that more fully supports the 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- school board
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 4

Conclusions

Bacon Academy's building administrators are adequately involved in the budget development process; however, meaningful involvement in and awareness of budget allocations vary among faculty members. Bacon Academy follows a process through which teacher leaders collect requests from department members and submit their proposal and requests to the administration. In turn, the school administration creates a budget that is given to the superintendent. From their input, the superintendent creates a budget that is ultimately presented and discussed among school and district administrators. Within Bacon Academy, some faculty members report having extensive meaningful discussions within their department regarding the budget, while other faculty report that they have limited input in the budget development process. Communication regarding updated information on the status of budget allocations is inconsistent, especially regarding budget allocations for technology. While there are opportunities for the principal to discuss the budget allocations with the superintendent and other administrators, as well as opportunities to speak publicly at board of education and board of finance meetings, teachers feel that they are unaware of updates to the budget allocations. Specifically, requests for technology that are budgeted for and expected to be fulfilled are often reduced without clear communication to faculty members. Therefore, the initial budget development process is clear and adequate, but there is not yet clear communication regarding updated information on the status of budget allocations to all faculty members, which impedes the faculty's ability to be informed and plan accordingly.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 7 Indicator 5

Conclusions

While the school site and plant generally support the delivery of high quality school programs and services in most instructional spaces, the athletic sites are insufficient for meeting the needs of the athletic department's programs. Instructional spaces, including classrooms and the majority of science labs, are sufficient and adequately equipped to deliver 21st century curriculum. At times, science teachers need to move to other labs in order to have enough room to conduct their lab activities. Teachers report that at times this is challenging because they need to share the spaces and work out scheduling accordingly. The library media center has appropriate space and is adequately equipped for independent research and inquiry. The long term planning to improve the efficiency and flexibility of the library media center, which includes wireless computers and flexible seating, strengthens the implementation of the school's 21st century curriculum. The cafeteria/student dining services and the food preparation areas are sufficient in size and adequately equipped. Core facilities, including visual and performing arts, physical education, technology, special education, and career technology are adequate to deliver high quality school programming and services for the students of Bacon Academy. Adequate and accessible spaces for administrative offices, private conferencing, the guidance department, and the health suite, facilitate confidentiality and ease of access to support the well-being of students. Outdoor spaces, including safe and secure parking for teachers, students, and visitors, adequately meet the requirements of the Bacon Academy community. While the athletic fields meet the requirements for a small number of teams, many teams have their practices and events at alternate locations throughout the town. Travel time to practice and events is increased, therefore students are impacted as they juggle their academic demands with their athletic commitments. Additionally, the space in the alternative education program building is sufficient for the current needs of staff and students who are housed at this location. Therefore, the adequate and appropriate space provided by most areas in Bacon Academy supports full implementation of the instructional and student support programs.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- school support staff

Standard 7 Indicator 6

Conclusions

Overall, Bacon Academy is exemplary in the ways it maintains documentation that the physical plant and facilities are in compliance with local fire, health and safety regulations, and they meet all applicable federal and state laws with the exception of the alternative education program which does not yet meet the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards. Evidence of monthly reviews of eyewash stations and boiler equipment was observed. Documentation related to local fire, health and safety regulations were provided and current. The alternative education program is not handicap accessible. Its status as a historical site mandates any changes to the historical part of the building are not allowed; however, the rear part of the building does not fall under the historical guidelines so an accessibility ramp can be installed to meet ADA regulations. As a result, the school's documentation that the physical plant and facilities are in compliance with local fire, health and safety regulations ensures a safe environment for teaching and learning and once the building that houses the alternative education program aligns with ADA standards, the school will be in full compliance with all applicable federal and state laws, giving access to all students regardless of physical needs.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- facility tour
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 7

Conclusions

Bacon Academy staff members actively engage parents and families as partners in each student's education in numerous ways and reach out to those families who have been less connected with the school, although the effectiveness of current practices is unclear. All teachers set a parent communication goal at the beginning of the year. Parents are provided with information in variety of digital formats such as the PowerSchool portal, access to the Digital Backpack, and Twitter communications. Additionally, all parents are invited to attend and participate in the Bacon Parent Council once a month prior to board of education meetings. This is an opportunity to relay information to parents, as well as to have parents provide their input and concerns. Open houses are held yearly. Parents stated that communication between individual teachers is easy and efficient and that the guidance department provides multiple planning and presentations for students and their families. This includes a yearly meeting with juniors and their parents to start the college and career planning process. However, feedback from parents regarding this practice indicates that a more efficient informational setting regarding college and career planning would better suit their needs and interests. Additionally, each freshman student meets yearly with his or her guidance counselor to review and support the transition to high school. PowerSchool data regarding parent contact and engagement is reviewed and further enhanced by the guidance department's contact with parents who are not active with the parent portal. School administration communicate updated safety and security procedures and policies with parents and students. Parent conferences are held twice per year, by appointment, during the school day. While the multiple parental outreach avenues implemented by staff are effective for many students and their families, parents reported that the timing of conferences limits the opportunity to engage with all families, especially those who are less connected with the school. There is not clear evidence that families who are less connected to the school have become more connected as a result of current practices. Once parents who are typically less connected with the school are more fully engaged, all students and families will have more information and opportunities for involvement.

Sources of Evidence

- teachers
- students
- parents
- school leadership
- school support staff
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 8

Conclusions

The school develops extensive higher education partnerships and some productive community and parent partnerships that support student learning. In developing the Bacon 10, Bacon Academy invited prominent industry and career leaders to attend a review board in order to provide feedback on the documents. This review board included representatives from pharmaceutical, manufacturing, information technologies, and military careers. They provided positive feedback regarding the Bacon 10 and shared the alignment between the Bacon 10 and many of their own tenets and missions. While the principal of Bacon Academy is part of the State Manufacturing Alliance, and the school has made connections with the Department of Labor, there are not yet any formal internship or externship opportunities for students. Teachers make individual community and business connections that support their curriculum when they are able to, but these opportunities are not directly facilitated by the school. Parent involvement is most apparent through the Bacon Parent Council, and some hiring committees. Parents were included in the process of building and reviewing the Bacon 10. Bacon Academy has developed extensive and productive higher education partnerships, offering approximately 50 dual enrollment opportunities, including 17 AP courses. Bacon Academy partners with Three Rivers Community College, University of Connecticut, Eastern Connecticut State University, and Syracuse University. The extensive higher education partnerships and dual enrollment programs provide enriching opportunities for students to gain skills and credits that will further their success in post-secondary educational programs. Once the school's parent, community, and business partnerships are as robust as the higher education partnerships, students will have increased opportunities in the full range of post-secondary transition opportunities and pathways.

Sources of Evidence

- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- parents
- school leadership

Standard 7 Commendations

Commendation

The sufficient funding for a wide range of school programs and services

Commendation

The collaboration between the director of educational operations and the custodial staff at Bacon Academy that keeps the school clean and maintained

Commendation

The development, planning, and funding of programs for the preventive and responsive maintenance of the building, including a reserve fund for long-term projects that might arise

Commendation

The support for enrollment through providing opportunities to tuition students

Commendation

The extensive higher education partnerships and numerous dual enrollment programs

Standard 7 Recommendations

Recommendation

Provide dependable funding for sufficient technology, staffing needs, professional development, curriculum revision, and extended learning opportunities

Recommendation

Increase communication with all staff members regarding updated information on the status of budget allocations

Recommendation

Improve the alternate education program location to align with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards

Recommendation

Continue to explore efficient tools to actively engage parents and families, especially those who are less connected with the school

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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

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

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

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

The visiting team would like to express thanks to the community for the hospitality and welcome. The school community completed an exemplary self-study that clearly identified the school's strengths and areas of need. The time and effort dedicated to the self-study and preparation for the visit ensured a successful accreditation visit.

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

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

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

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

Roster of Team Members

Chair(s)

Chair: Tony Gasper - Wolcott Public Schools

Assistant Chair: Carol Luckenbach - Connecticut River Academy

Team Members

Gayle Attruia - Fairfield Warde High School

Miguel Cardona - Meriden Public Schools

Jessica Cavallaro - North Branford High School

Todd Dyer - Shepaug Valley Middle/High School

Kurt Janke - Ledyard High School

Kaley Kowarick - Ridgefield High School

Andrew Marchand - Torrington High School

Sharon McCutcheon - Classical Magnet School

Ben Scurto - Stafford High School

Matt Sigall - Windsor Locks High School

Lisa Tunucci - Fairfield Ludlowe High School

Ethan Warner - Orville H. Platt High School

Jessica Zamachaj - Amity Regional Senior High School

Scott Zucca - Brookfield High School