

**New England Association of
Schools and Colleges**



Commission on Public Secondary Schools

**Report of the Visiting Committee for
Belchertown High School**

**Belchertown, Massachusetts
April 13 – 16, 2008**

**John K. Clements, Chair
Laurie Farkas, Assistant Chair
Christine Vigneux, Principal**

New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.
209 Burlington Road, Bedford, MA 01730-1433

TEL 781.271.0022
FAX 781.271.0950

www.neasc.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Statement on Limitations	4
Introduction	5
Overview of Findings.....	7
Discussion of Significant Findings regarding Teaching and Learning and the Support of Teaching and Learning	
School and Community Report.....	9
Belchertown High School Mission and Expectations for Student Learning	12
Teaching and Learning Standards.....	13
Mission and Expectations	14
Curriculum	18
Instruction	25
Assessment of Student Learning	31
Support of Teaching and Learning Standards	36
Leadership and Organization	37
School Resources for Learning	44
Community Resources for Learning	53
Follow-Up Responsibilities	58

APPENDICES

- A. Roster of Team Members
- B. Commission Policy on Substantive Change

STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS

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

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

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

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

Teaching and Learning Standards

- Mission and Expectations for Student Learning
- Curriculum
- Instruction
- Assessment of Student Learning

Support of Teaching and Learning Standards

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

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

Preparation for the Evaluation Visit - The School Self-Study

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At Belchertown High School, a committee of eleven members, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned all teachers and administrators in the school to appropriate subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities, and facilities available for young people. In addition to faculty members, the self-study committees included a number of students, parents, and central office professionals.

The self-study of Belchertown High School extended over a period of 18 school months from September 2006 to April 2008. The visiting committee was pleased to note that students, parents, and school board members joined the professional staff in the self-study deliberations.

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

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

The Process Used by the Visiting Committee

A visiting committee of 15 evaluators was assigned by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate Belchertown High School. The Committee members spent four days in Belchertown, reviewed the self-study documents which had been prepared for their examination, met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students, and parents, shadowed students, visited classes, and interviewed teachers to determine the degree to which the school meets the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. Since the evaluators represented public schools, central office administrators, and vocational institutions, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Belchertown High School. The visiting team built its professional judgment on evidence collected from the following sources:

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 22.5 hours shadowing 15 students
- a total of 20 hours of classroom observation (in addition to time shadowing students)
- numerous informal observations in and around the school
- tours of the facility
- individual meetings with 30 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and the assessment of student learning
- group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers
- the examination of student work including a selection of work collected by the school

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

recommendations that in the team's judgment will be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning and to better meet Commission Standards.

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

Overview of Findings

Although the conclusions of the visiting committee on the school's adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation appear in various sections of this report, the committee wishes to highlight some findings in the paragraphs that follow. These findings are not intended to be a summary of the report.

Teaching and Learning at Belchertown High School

The Belchertown High School community used an inclusive and reflective process in the development of its mission statement and expectations for student learning. As a result of these efforts, the mission statement accurately represents the core values of the students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members. Following the creation of the mission statement and expectations for student learning, the school began the work of integrating the academic, civic, and social learning expectations into the teaching and learning activities provided for students. In addition, the school uses the mission to guide the procedures, policies, and decisions of the school. Although Belchertown High School is still in the early stages of the implementation of its mission, its genuine commitment to the values expressed in the document will continue to focus its educational efforts.

The curriculum at Belchertown High School provides students with challenging learning experiences aimed at promoting inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking. Much of this work takes place at the course level as a result of the lack of a formal written curriculum. Teachers have made the initial steps toward the creation of a written curriculum through the development of a program of studies and through the use of teachers' syllabi. As they work to develop and implement a written curriculum, they will create opportunities to establish curricular integration, curricular coordination and articulation between and among grade levels, and a formalized plan of education for the students at Belchertown High School. In addition to making these efforts, Belchertown High School also faces the challenge of working with its faculty members to involve them in the curriculum development process and to provide them with professional development opportunities based on curriculum.

The teachers at Belchertown High School are qualified, knowledgeable, and dedicated to their students. Through their efforts, students are provided with a rigorous learning experience and a variety of ways to apply their understanding. In addition, teachers often provide students with a personalized learning experience that directs instruction to the specific needs of the learners. The school faces the challenge of helping teachers to further develop their instructional skills by providing professional development in this area and by ensuring that supervision and evaluation practices support instructional development.

In the area of assessment, Belchertown High School has begun the process of assessing students' achievement of the school-wide academic learning expectations. In addition, teachers often use

course-specific rubrics as an evaluative tool to address the learning goals of individual classes. Though teachers currently employ a variety of assessment strategies, they will need ongoing professional development in the area of assessment in order to continue the process of professional improvement. Belchertown High School will also need to continue the development of the process to measure student achievement of the civic and social learning expectations.

Support of Teaching and Learning at Belchertown High School

Through the leadership of teachers, administrators, and other members of the school community, Belchertown High School has established a vital learning community that is defined by its proud, respectful, and welcoming school climate. Students are guided by faculty members who have a sincere interest in the learning and achievement of their students; student achievement is displayed prominently in the school. Though the student schedule and grouping patterns promote the success of learners, Belchertown faces the challenge of enhancing an educational program that meets the interests and needs of its students. Also, the school will look for leadership in order to improve curriculum development, professional development, and supervision and evaluation as means to furthering a shared vision, direction, and focus on student learning.

The cooperative efforts of student support services at Belchertown High School help to provide the achievement of the mission and expectations for all students. Guidance counselors, nurses, library media specialists, and special educators collaborate with members of the faculty to provide an appropriate learning experience for their students. Despite challenges in staffing, guidance counselors work to provide a range of services. The school nurse provides a range of health services to students. The library media center makes available a variety of resources and is staffed with a knowledgeable staff that helps to integrate its resources into instruction. Special educators play a vital role in the identification of special education needs and the appropriate personalization of learning. Belchertown High School faces the challenges of fulfilling the staffing needs of student support services and determining a process to evaluate these services on an ongoing basis.

The physical plant of Belchertown High School is a modern, aesthetically pleasing, and well-maintained building. The community values this resource and demonstrates pride in its upkeep and appearance. In addition, the equipment and resources available to the members of the school community appropriately support the teaching and learning process. Despite ongoing planning efforts to address the needs of the students at Belchertown High School, the leaders of the school community face a continuing challenge of securing funding that adequately meets the learning needs of their students.

Belchertown High School School and Community Profile

The Community

Belchertown, Massachusetts overlooks the Connecticut River Valley to the west and the Quaboag River Valley to the east, with a traditional New England town common at its center. Belchertown High School is situated south of the center of town and is surrounded by athletic fields, wooded areas, neighborhood homes and other school buildings. Routes 9, 202 and 181 run through Belchertown and Exit 7 on the Massachusetts Turnpike is approximately 15 minutes away. The famed Quabbin Reservoir, the University of Massachusetts and the 150 year old Belchertown Fair annually draw thousands to and through this tight-knit community.

In terms of demographics, Belchertown's population, which has experienced nearly unmatched growth in the Commonwealth over the course of the last decade, is 13,017, composed of mostly whites and a few minority groups. For example, in 2000 no minority constituted more than 1.6% of the total population. English is the primary language in Belchertown and the median family income is \$60,810 (2000) with 5.9% of the population living below the poverty line. According to the best local assessments and estimates on hand, from 2000 to 2006 Belchertown's population has grown by about 13%. Consisting of approximately 55 square miles, the town has the eighth largest area in the state. Much of this land has historically been undeveloped, but the past decade has seen a great deal of new home construction, impacting the population of Belchertown High School. When an NEASC Visiting Committee last evaluated BHS, in the 1998 accreditation cycle, the student population for grades 9 – 12 was approximately 400; by the time the NEASC Visiting Committee arrived during the 2008 accreditation cycle, the student population for grades 9 – 12 was nearing 800.

The School and Students

There are approximately 157 teachers district-wide to serve the students of the Belchertown Public Schools. The student population is 92.7% white with the other 7.3% consisting of various minority groups. None of these groups constitutes more than 2.7% of the population, with Hispanic being the largest minority group designation at 2.6%. Belchertown is one of seven towns which support and work in partnership with Pathfinder Regional Vocation-Technical High School in the neighboring town of Palmer. Students choosing an academic/career path of a more vocational/technical nature may elect Pathfinder to further their high school education.

The populations of the Belchertown Public Schools is as follows: Belchertown High School (Grades 9 – 12) leads with a population of approximately 760 students (370 male, 390 female); Jabish Brook Middle School (Grades 7 – 8) has approximately 440 students; Chestnut Hill Community School (Grades 4 – 6) has approximately 630 students; Swift River Elementary School (Grades 1 – 3) has approximately 550 students; and Cold Spring (Pre-K and K) has approximately 220 students, for a total approximate student population of 2,610. Tadgell School, another available building in the school district, was not assigned grades at the start of the 2007 – 2008 school year, but is scheduled for minor renovations and could be available for future district growth.

The Belchertown School District ranked 298th of 328 districts in the state in ‘per pupil’ expenditures, with an expenditure of \$8,791 per pupil compared to the state average expenditure of \$11,210 per pupil in FY 2006. During the 2005 – 2006 school year, local and state resources accounted for 92.7% of district funds, leaving 7.3% to be obtained through federal and other resources. Of the local property taxes collected, 73% were allocated for the schools. Sixty-six students each paid non-resident tuition fees of \$3,971 to attend Belchertown High School in both 2005 and 2006. It has been approximated that about 4.7% of the Belchertown school-aged student population attend non-public schools.

There are 49 teachers at Belchertown High School, a number which is inadequate to serve the student population appropriately. The Massachusetts Department of Education does not report data such as “per pupil” expenditures on a high school-only basis, but on the district as a whole, so making comparisons is also most readily done at the district level. According to the Massachusetts DOE “Statistical Comparisons” information for the FY 2004 – 2006 (the last years for which such information is available,) Belchertown was 324th of the 328 school districts in terms of the amount spent on teachers per pupil. (The state average is \$4,353 vs. Belchertown at \$3,101.) When combining the data available in the DOE “Statistical Comparisons” to establish student to teacher ratios, Belchertown ranked 319th of 328 districts. The need for more teachers is clearly evident.

The average daily student attendance rate at BHS is nearly 95% (95.3% for males and 94.3% for females.) The school operates on a rotating schedule: 7 rotating periods, 6 of which are 44 minutes long, with a 7th “long block” of 76 minutes during which 4 lunch seatings also take place. The faculty is provided with one preparation period during the day as well as one directed study period to oversee. Students attend school for 180 days and for a minimum of 975 hours.

From freshman year on, students select courses in the academic areas of English, mathematics, social studies, foreign language and science. Students may select courses with a number of different structures and objectives, ranging from assisted classrooms to Advanced Placement classes, where offered. 45% of students are enrolled in at least one honors class, 30% in college preparatory courses and 25% in Advanced Placement courses. Approximately 13% of students in the building receive special education services. All students are required to enroll in health and physical education classes each year and are encouraged to take courses in the fine and performing arts. The remainder of the students’ schedules may be selected from elective courses, including band, although more faculty members are needed in order to offer more electives.

In addition to the academic courses previously mentioned, Belchertown High School offers a variety of co-curricular activities for its students including 15 athletic programs for boys and girls, ranging from cross-country to ice hockey, concert band, jazz band, choir and various clubs. Each year, over 90% of students participate in at least one of these activities.

Statistics from the class of 2005 indicate that 70% of graduates attended four year colleges. 20% enrolled in two year colleges, 5% enrolled in business and technical schools, 3% entered the military and 2% entered the workforce. Recent BHS graduates have chosen such colleges and

universities as Tufts, Amherst, Brandeis, Smith, The University of Massachusetts, Westfield State College, Western New England College and Holyoke Community College.

The School Improvement Plan

In an effort to constantly reassess and reconsider the workings of Belchertown High School, high emphasis has been placed on the School Improvement Planning Document which is integral to the district's overall school improvement plan. The plan is updated yearly with input solicited from the faculty at bi-monthly faculty meetings, the Department Chairpersons and the Department Coordinators at weekly Department Chair-Coordinator meetings, and the Belchertown High School Council at monthly school council meetings. All of these meetings are facilitated by the principal and the final document is the principal's responsibility. An increase in the number of teachers at the high school has remained the top priority when listing suggested improvements. School improvement planning at Belchertown High School considers a wide variety of stakeholders and is driven by the school's mission. There is general agreement about the school's goals among stakeholders since the mission and expectations of the school are widely communicated and referenced.

Belchertown High School Mission Statement

The Belchertown High School educational community fosters academic excellence and responsible citizenship in a positive, safe, and respectful environment in order to develop productive contributors to society.

Academic Expectations:

Belchertown High School students are expected to:

- **Read actively and critically.**
- **Write effectively.**
- **Speak effectively.**
- **Use a variety of resources including technology to acquire, process, and utilize information effectively.**
- **Employ multiple critical and creative thinking strategies in reasoning and problem solving.**
- **Demonstrate a knowledge and appreciation of subject matter across the curriculum.**

Social Expectations:

Belchertown High School students are expected to:

- **Respect and value themselves, their school environment and the diversity of the Belchertown High School community.**
- **Contribute to a positive school climate.**
- **Work cooperatively to achieve group goals or resolve conflicts.**

Civic Expectations:

Belchertown High School students are expected to :

- **Participate in activities that encourage leadership and service.**
- **Understand and exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens in a democratic and multicultural society.**

COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

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

1

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

MISSION AND EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT LEARNING

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

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

CONCLUSIONS

The Belchertown High School Mission and Expectations for Student Learning were developed in a collaborative effort of the school community and approved and supported by the professional staff, students, parents, administrators, and the school committee. The development of the mission and expectations began with departmental submissions which were presented to the faculty as a whole. Following this step, a volunteer, representative committee consisting of students, parents, faculty members, and administrators refined the departmental submissions and created a draft which they submitted to the faculty. In September, 2006, the faculty reviewed this draft and voted to accept it. Later in September, the school committee reviewed and voted to accept the draft. Students, parents, and staff members agree with and support the mission statement and strive to meet the academic, civic, and social expectations. The inclusive process for the development of the mission statement and expectations for student learning led to the creation of a document that truly reflects the essence of the school community. (self-study, Endicott Survey, teachers, students, school committee)

The mission statement represents the school community's fundamental values and beliefs about student learning. There is wide-scale acceptance of the mission statement, including 95% of staff members and 90% of parents who report support and agreement with the ideals of the document. All groups of the school community speak to the various principles put forth in the mission statement. For example, teachers reference the many ways in which they promote academic excellence. Students report that the while the emphasis of their learning is placed on academic excellence, the establishment of a positive, safe, and respectful environment, as reflected in the mission statement, is a shared goal of the school community. Parents, too, express confidence in the mission statement's accuracy, referencing the number of school-sponsored extracurricular activities that help their children become "productive contributors to society." As a result of the agreement that the mission statement is representative of Belchertown High School's values and beliefs about student learning, the school community increases its ability to successfully implement the mission statement. (self-study, survey results, students, teachers, parents)

Belchertown High School (BHS) has defined school-wide academic, civic, and social expectations that are measurable and reflect the school's mission. The school identifies six academic expectations that could be measured across the curriculum and that assist in the achievement of academic excellence, one of the primary ideals of the mission statement. These academic expectations include skills that are needed to achieve academically such as active and critical reading, effective writing, and effective speaking. However, the expectations also suggest the application of these skills by asking students to "use a variety of resources...to acquire, process, and utilize information effectively," to "employ multiple critical and creative thinking strategies in reasoning and problem-solving," and to "demonstrate a knowledge and appreciation of subject matter across the curriculum." Teachers report that they measure these expectations primarily through their classroom assessments although, rubrics to assess achievement have been created by the school and are used by some teachers. (self-study survey, students, teachers, parents)

Belchertown High School has identified a targeted level of successful achievement for each of its academic expectations for student learning. After formalizing the academic expectations, the administration and faculty developed six academic rubrics to assess successful achievement. Although these rubrics are relatively new to the school, they have been used in a variety of academic areas. Students are familiar with the rubrics and understand their application. They recognize, however, that not all teachers or subject areas incorporate the rubrics as an

assessment tool. Teachers, too, say that they sometimes modify or expand the rubrics to enhance their relevance when applied to specific subject areas. At this early stage in the implementation of the rubrics, they are not yet used in a formal, consistent manner as a means of assessing students on their achievement of the academic expectations. Nonetheless, by creating the rubrics and increasing their use, the teachers and administrators have provided a system by which they can determine whether a student has reached the targeted level of successful achievement for each of its academic expectations and students can understand how to improve their own work for greater success. (Endicott survey, students, teachers, parents, self-study)

Indicators by which Belchertown High School assesses the school's progress in achieving school-wide civic and social expectations have not been established. There are many opportunities for student involvement in civic and social activities, including but not limited to athletics, student government, model congress, the BHS Humanities Club, the BHS Local Environmental Action Force (LEAF), community blood drives, food drives, peer tutoring, and the Gay Straight Alliance, and service organizations. Furthermore, there is consensus among staff, students, administrators and parents that there is a high level of involvement in civic and social activities at Belchertown High School. While the school can generate data regarding the level of participation in social and community organizations, it cannot yet measure students' level of achievement of the social and civic expectations for student learning. As a result, students at Belchertown High School are not assessed on their accomplishment of the social and civic learning expectations. (self-study, teachers, students, parents)

The mission statement and the school's expectations for student learning guide the procedures, policies, and decisions of Belchertown High School and are evident in the culture of the school. Mission and expectations posters hang in all classrooms, and the document is printed in student agendas as well as school publications and documents; in addition, students read the mission statement over the morning announcements every Monday morning. However, the integration of the mission statement and learning expectations into the life at the high school extends beyond their successful communication. There is a variety of formal connections between the mission statement and the procedures, policies, and decisions of the schools. For instance, teachers' syllabi make connections between course-specific learning goals and the academic expectations. Also, departmental budgets show the link between their requests and the mission statement. Another example can be found in the handling of disciplinary issues. The assistant principal helps students to recognize how their behavior impacts the achievement of mission statement and civic and social expectations for student learning. In addition, the spirit of the mission statement and expectations for student learning is evident in the culture of the school. A positive and respectful relationship exists between the students, staff members, and administrators. Students report that they feel safe in their school environment and that teachers and administrators are responsive to concerns about their safety. Students, teachers, and administrators express pride in their school. Furthermore, parent groups such as the school council, band boosters, and athletic boosters work cooperatively toward established goals. Through the efforts of the school community, the mission statement has a formalized impact on the management of the school and its values are incorporated into the culture at Belchertown High School. (self-study, Endicott survey, students, teachers, administrators, parents, school committee members)

At this point, Belchertown High School has not established a process to regularly review the mission statement and expectations for student learning using a variety of data to ensure that they reflect student needs, community expectations, the district mission, and state and national standards. During the development and early stages of the mission's acceptance, a collaborative process was used to solicit feedback from a variety of groups. For example, the principal holds

Friday morning breakfast clubs with students in order to hear their thoughts or concerns; at some of these meetings students share their perspectives on the mission statement. The ideas that came from these meetings were often communicated to the faculty through her Monday morning memos. Despite these opportunities to gain feedback, as noted in the school's self-study, a regular review of the mission statement has not been established. As a result, Belchertown High School can not yet ensure that the mission and expectations for student learning continues to reflect student needs, community expectations, district mission, and state and national standards. (self-study, teachers, administrators)

COMMENDATIONS

1. The inclusive process used to develop the mission statement and expectations for student learning
2. The effective alignment of the mission statement and expectations for student learning with the core values and beliefs of the school community
3. The clear identification of academic, civic, and social learning expectations that are measurable and reflect the school's mission
4. The creation of rubrics which can be used to measure the students' achievement of the academic learning expectations
5. The dedicated use of the mission statement to guide the procedures, policies, and decisions of the school
6. The vital role that the mission statement plays in establishing a positive, safe, and respectful environment

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Determine indicators by which students' achievement of the civic and social learning expectations can be measured
2. Develop and implement a plan for the review of the school's mission and expectations for student learning that is based on an analysis of data and that involves all members of the school community

2

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

CURRICULUM

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

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

CONCLUSIONS

The academic departments at Belchertown High School have not formally identified the school-wide academic expectations for which they are responsible. While some departments list the expectations for which they are responsible in the program of studies, other departments do not make reference to specific expectations. In addition, some teachers expressed confusion about this topic. While many faculty members report that they are mindful of the academic expectations for student learning, they report that they do not aim their instruction at specific expectations according to their curriculum area. Many teachers report that they choose the expectations that seem most relevant for their courses. Others believe that every course should address each expectation. As the written curriculum, currently in its beginning stages, is developed, teachers expect that the academic expectations will be more specifically linked to individual curriculum areas. When this connection between curriculum areas and expectations is formalized, the school can formally assign accountability for the achievement of academic expectations to the different curriculum areas, and data will be collected to be used to guide curriculum and instruction improvement. (self-study, teachers, student shadowing)

With the curriculum at Belchertown High School still in its beginning stages, not all teachers are able to fully align their courses consistently with the school-wide academic expectations. The program of studies, teachers' syllabi, and the beginning curricular guides from several academic departments provide some guidance in this area by listing each course with applicable academic expectations. Despite this, teachers report that the determination of academic expectations to be included often takes place on an individual basis and is not consistent from teacher-to-teacher or course-to-course. Teachers recognize the need for consistency in this area and expect that the completion of a written curriculum document will clarify their responsibilities. With the consistent and formal alignment of curriculum with school-wide academic expectations, the school may ensure that all students have sufficient opportunity to practice and to achieve each of those expectations. (self-study, teachers, students, program of studies)

Although curriculum documents have been created in several curriculum areas, Belchertown High School does not have written curriculum documents in all areas that prescribes content, integrates relevant school-wide learning expectations, identifies course-specific learning goals, suggests instructional strategies, or suggests assessment techniques. The teachers and administrators recognize that they are beginning a several year process to create a written curriculum, and faculty members understand the importance of this process. Currently, however, the school relies on the program of studies and individual syllabi as their primary sources of curriculum information. The program of studies and course syllabi include some valuable information about classes and departments, and they provide a starting point for the school in the areas of course content, connection to school-wide learning expectations, and identification of course-specific goals. They do not contain any information regarding suggested instructional or assessment strategies. In some curriculum areas work is underway to provide a more comprehensive document. As time goes on, it will be necessary for the school to create a format for curriculum development that contains all necessary elements and that is used by all curriculum areas. (self-study, students, teachers, administrators, observation)

Although the initial steps in this process have been taken to formalize the written curriculum in some academic areas, there is no clear plan to complete a written curriculum for all departments. Academic departments are at varying stages in the drafting process. At present, there is neither a complete accepted template for the document nor a timeline for the ensuing steps in the process. Without a completed written curriculum in all academic areas, Belchertown High School does not have a formal plan to fulfill its mission statement and expectations for student learning. Despite varying degrees of completion of the curriculum, the content of instruction often engages students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills. In addition, there are some opportunities for the authentic application of knowledge and skills. Students are involved in a variety of learning activities that include but are not limited to creating essential questions to guide their study, writing persuasive essays, answering open-ended questions, and collaborating to investigate, organize, and present information to their peers. All these excellent strategies can be documented in curricula at all levels to ensure opportunity for all students to achieve the school's expectations. (self-study, students, teachers, observation)

Further examples of varied learning experiences are evident through all courses. For example, students in English classes use literary criticism to hone their own understanding of a text. Students in math classes participate in "50-point class work" problem-solving activities where they work cooperatively to apply learned strategies to new situations. Students in history classes create an assessment to measure their own understanding of concepts. In biology and chemistry classes, students use research to clarify their understanding. Students in foreign language classes identify elements of Greek architecture in the buildings and structures of their community. Authentic application of knowledge and skills is evident in activities such as the science design competition, the model congress, the humanities club, and the BHS Work to Learn Program. Through these activities, students are provided with opportunities to engage in active learning and authentic application of knowledge and skills. (self-study, students, teachers, sample student work, observation)

The content of instruction at Belchertown High School is not formally integrated across curriculum areas. Several projects allow teachers to collaborate on an individual basis. For instance, in American Literature Survey 11, students read The Crucible in conjunction with the early American and Puritan unit from United States History I. Despite this example, integration of the curriculum is not formalized at Belchertown High School. Teachers report that they often take the time to show interdisciplinary concepts but that these points of clarification often result from a student question or classroom discussion and are not formalized. Students reinforce this point by stating that while their teachers are able to draw connections between topics, they often prompt these explanations by informing the teachers of what they are studying in other disciplines. Teachers express interest in working with their peers in other departments to formalize the connection between curriculum areas. As this element of the curriculum develops, teachers will be better able to show how concepts are connected and to eliminate the isolation within individual curriculum areas. (students, teachers, sample student work, observation)

Teachers at Belchertown High School make efforts to provide depth of understanding over breadth of coverage. Seventy-eight percent of teachers and 65% of students believe that the curriculum emphasizes breadth over depth. Learning activities such having students write multiple drafts of essays or using many project-based lessons require additional time to

strengthen understanding of specific concepts. These opportunities are recognized by faculty members as important to teaching and learning despite the amount of instructional time needed to complete them appropriately, nevertheless, teachers feel that as standard-based assessment has become increasingly important to their students, they must limit the amount of time devoted to a specific concept in order to ensure that the students are well-prepared for all elements of those assessments. Also, in-depth instruction of concepts currently offered is at individual teacher's discretion. Without a written curriculum, teachers do not have a formal guide as to which concepts require more specific, in-depth attention. (self-study, teachers, students, Endicott survey)

Belchertown High School provides some opportunities for students to extend learning beyond the normal course offerings and the school campus. A variety of extra-curricular clubs is available to engage the varied interests of the school population. Some of these groups and clubs include the biology club, crafts club, dance club, Envirothon, the Gay-Straight Alliance, and the BHS Local Environmental Action Force (LEAF). Also, students can expand beyond the curriculum in the school by utilizing the dual enrollment option with Holyoke Community College. There are also some options available to students to extend learning beyond the normal course offerings. Students are able to attend field trips and competitions in conjunction with activities such as the model congress, the history day competition, and trips abroad to Canada, Italy, England, and Costa Rica. A limited number of students participates in a school-to-work program and internships with these opportunities provided primarily through the special education department. Students report that these programs, although not widely utilized, provide valuable experiences. When polled, 48.5% of parents states that the students can apply what they have learned to real life situations. Through these groups, clubs, and activities at Belchertown High School, some students have the opportunity to expand their learning beyond the normal course offerings. (self-study, teachers, students, student handbook, Endicott survey)

There is very little curricular coordination and articulation between and among all academic areas as well as with sending schools in the district. This results, in part, from the developing state of the school-wide written curriculum at the high school. Without the completion of this document, formal coordination and articulation in all academic areas can not be arranged or documented. Collaboration among academic areas takes place on an informal, teacher-to-teacher project-oriented basis. For example, English teachers and art teachers worked together to coordinate a writing exercise with the study of Picasso's paintings; however, this type of collaboration is not formalized through the curriculum. Additionally, there is no time formally dedicated to curriculum coordination. Faculty members are hopeful that the hiring of a curriculum coordinator for the 2008 – 2009 school year will provide support in this area. They look forward to continuing the process of curriculum development and collaboration, with this person directing the process to facilitate completeness and efficiency and to facilitate interdepartmental curriculum coordination. When Belchertown High School has completed its written curriculum and allocated sufficient time, it will be able to effectively coordinate and articulate the content of instruction between and among departments as well as with the sending schools in the district. (self-study, teachers, students, department chairs)

Instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the library are sufficient to assist with the implementation of the curriculum. Each classroom is provided with technological materials that support the curriculum. All classrooms have a computer that

connects to a television at the front of the room, allowing teachers to display to the class information on their computer screen such as Power Point presentations or websites. The classroom televisions can also connect to graphing calculators, allowing math teachers to display their calculator screen to the entire class. Some classes make further use of technology through the use of LCD projectors and SMART Boards™. The library/media center provides a variety of materials that support the implementation of curriculum as there is an extensive collection of print materials available to students and teachers. Technological resources can be checked out from the library/media specialist, and the library/media center houses enough computers to support the needs of students and teachers. Students regularly make use of these materials during study halls. Furthermore, teachers often bring their classes to the media center to make use of the computers that are available. If the computers in the library/media center are not available, other computer labs in the high school can be used by teachers and their students. Although computers are less viable as they age, the teachers and administrators believe that a proposed switch to an upgraded system will maintain the usefulness of many computers. The materials available in classrooms and in the library/media center provide teachers with important support in the implementation of curriculum. (school tour, teachers, self-study, students)

Despite sufficient instructional materials, insufficient staffing levels cause an ongoing concern regarding the appropriate provision of the curriculum. Faculty members point to limited elective offerings and a high number of students assigned to study halls as the direct result of inadequate staffing levels. Currently, 49 teachers serve as instructors for nearly 800 students. Teachers repeatedly express concern about the increasing class sizes, particularly in the core subjects. In addition, students are frustrated that the elective offerings they would like to take are not always available because of the lack of teachers to present them. (school tour, teachers, self-study, students)

The professional staff is not formally involved in the ongoing development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum. Faculty members report that they do not have the opportunity to collaborate with their fellow teachers, department chairs, or administrators in curriculum development. There have been no opportunities to further the development of the current curriculum beyond the program of studies and the individual teacher's syllabi. In addition, 59.1% of staff members does not feel that decisions about curricular revision are based on student performance and assessment. Teachers regularly develop, evaluate, and revise the content of their own instruction, but the informal, individual nature of this work does not assist in department-wide and school-wide efforts in these areas. Belchertown High School needs a formal written curriculum and a plan to involve the staff in the development, evaluation, and revision of this document to implement the curriculum effectively and adapt it to the needs of the students. (self-study, teachers, department chairs, administrators)

No formal time is allocated for the revision and development of curriculum, and financial resources and personnel are not available to allow the faculty to develop and revise curriculum. Throughout the course of the school year, teachers may participate in as many as twenty-five, ninety minute after school meetings for district and school site curriculum professional development. Schedules generated by the superintendent for school years 2006-2009 show that time has been scheduled for curricular development; however, faculty and department chairs at BHS report that curriculum work does not take place at these meetings, and the time is used for

other things. Sixty-nine point two percent of the staff does not believe that time is provided to develop, evaluate, and revise curriculum. Faculty members are hopeful that the addition of a district-wide curriculum coordinator as included in the FY09 school budget, will provide additional assistance in meeting their curricular goals. Teachers and administrators believe that the absence of a district-wide administrator in this area has created a challenge in developing and adapting a curriculum. As the process of curricular development continues, Belchertown High School will need to provide time, resources, and personnel to effectively complete this goal. (teachers, Endicott survey, self-study, department chairs, administrators)

Professional development activities do not support development and implementation of curriculum. Approximately 88% of staff members believes that the current professional development does not support the development process. In order to address this need, some teachers have attended professional development on their own. While teachers are given release time to attend professional development activities, many times fees are paid out of pocket by the faculty. In FY08, \$2000 was allotted in the budget for professional development. That, plus the district's impending addition of a curriculum coordinator are viewed as a positive development in this area. It is hoped that the coordinator will provide professional development and that opportunities will be created for faculty members to share their professional development needs to plan these opportunities. The absence of professional development that supports the development and implementation of curriculum impedes the development of effective individual, departmental, and school-wide curriculum. (faculty members, department chairs, self-study, Endicott survey)

COMMENDATIONS

1. The teachers' strategies to provide learning opportunities that engage students in inquiry, higher-order thinking, and problem-solving
2. The teachers' strategies to provide learning experiences that emphasize depth of understanding over breadth of coverage
3. The opportunities provided by the school to extend students' learning experiences beyond the school day
4. The provision of materials, facilities, and instructional supports that allow implementation of the curriculum

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Identify clearly the school-wide academic expectations for which each curriculum area is responsible
2. Align the curriculum with the school-wide academic expectations and ensure that students have an opportunity to practice and achieve those expectations
3. Complete a written curriculum document that prescribes content; integrates relevant school-wide learning expectations; identifies course specific learning goals; suggests instructional strategies; and suggests assessment techniques including the use of school-wide rubrics
4. Formalize a plan to show interdisciplinary connections across the curriculum
5. Work with academic departments and sending schools in the district to establish effective curricular coordination and articulation
6. Provide staffing levels that appropriately support teaching and learning

- 7. Establish and implement a plan to involve the staff in the development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum**
- 8. Provide sufficient time, financial resources, and personnel to the development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum**
- 9. Provide professional development activities that support the development and implementation of curriculum**

3

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

INSTRUCTION

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

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

CONCLUSIONS

Faculty members at Belchertown High School employ instructional strategies that align with the school's mission statement and expectations for student learning. One of the core values put forth in the mission statement is academic excellence. Approximately 77% of teachers says the mission statement influences their repertoire of teaching methods. Teachers promote academic excellence by directing learning that involves higher order thinking, critical and creative thinking, and problem-solving skills. In these learning opportunities, students sometimes focus on the academic expectations for student learning. As referenced in the program of studies, there is a general awareness of these expectations and some classroom activities across departments aim to meet these goals. There are some specific programs and instructional activities that specifically aim to meet the goals of the social and civic expectations. For instance, ninth graders are enrolled in a freshman seminar that is run by the guidance department with the goals to teach, to support and to develop the social and civic achievement of the students. In addition, teachers and administrators model respect, and the school offers a safe environment that promotes academic excellence and responsible citizenship. As a result of the efforts of faculty members and administrators, the instructional practices at Belchertown High School are consistent with the school's mission statement and expectations for student learning. (self-study, students, teachers, Endicott survey)

The faculty members at BHS often personalize instruction. Teachers report that most of this differentiation takes place through student conferencing, small group work, scaffolding reading for various levels, and by working with students with individual education plans (IEPs). Personalized instruction is most prevalent in special education settings. Resource room teachers modify quizzes and texts based on individual reading levels. Students report that teachers recognize individual student learning needs. They cite a high number of teachers who offer individual or group tutoring during extra help sessions after school as well as during their prep periods. However, this takes place outside of the regular classroom. In some cases, high student teacher ratios make the personalization of instruction difficult, though the attempts are numerous. Through the personalized approach of instruction in many areas, teachers provide instruction in a way that all students can understand to ensure equitable student opportunity to achieve success. (students, self-study, student work, teachers)

Connections across disciplines take place only on a limited basis. Although teachers report making references to other disciplines when appropriate, they also note that formal interdisciplinary instruction does not regularly occur. Some collaborative efforts such as the English and history departments' joint study of The Crucible and the early American/Puritan unit provide an opportunity to work across disciplines, but these units are presented independently and are not part of an overall curricular coordination. Teachers state that there is a need for these connections, but that lack of common planning time and grade level meetings makes it difficult to implement effectively. (students, self-study, student work, teachers)

Students are frequently called upon to engage in active learning. Students report that there are many classes where teachers work as facilitators rather than lecturers, making efforts to give the

students an active role in the learning process. Even when the lesson plan requires lecture, students say these lectures are rarely driven solely by the teacher but are influenced by student response. It is common for students to take part in class activities such as group learning, teaching a portion of the class, presenting orally, performing skits, or taking part in role-playing. Active learning strategies are employed in a variety of areas ranging from document-based questions in history to hands-on laboratory experiments in science and multi-media projects in art. As a result of these practices, students become active participants in their own education and have increased opportunities to internalize their learning. (student shadowing, students, student work)

Students at Belchertown High School are regularly engaged as self-directed learners. In many classes, students are given a choice in how they present information, what they specifically study, and topics and theses for essays. In some history classes, students develop the essential questions they will explore in a given unit of study, and in physical education classes, they create and implement their own fitness plans. Students mention a great deal of choice in science labs, English essays, and history assignments. In French and Spanish classes, students complete “choice time” projects that involve developing their own research questions on topics of interest to them that relate to the language. As a result of being actively engaged in teaching and learning, students have an opportunity to take greater meaning from their learning opportunities. (student work, students, teachers)

Teachers at Belchertown High School often call upon their students to utilize higher-order thinking skills to promote depth of understanding. An example of this takes place in the English department where students use literary analysis as a vehicle for evaluating and synthesizing themes in literature. For example, students read Hamlet independently and expand their understanding of the play through a variety of literary perspectives. In the math department, teachers often ask students to analyze data and apply the results to real world situations. Another example of this type of learning activity occurs in the social studies department’s “Salon Project” that requires students to act out the role of significant scientists and writers, gaining an in-depth understanding of the material. Also, students report that their teachers will often spend a significant amount of time on a single topic, investigating the information in a variety of ways before moving on to the next concept. (students, teachers, self-study, student work)

Students at BHS have the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills with varying levels of reality. Teachers report that they make efforts to provide these opportunities as part of their instruction; approximately 50% of teachers report that they allow for practical application six or more times per month. Students report that this occurs 51% of the time. One example of an exercise that allows for application of skills and knowledge takes place when statistics students create, administer, and evaluate a survey that deals with a school, local, national, and/or international social issue. Another example of learning activities in which students apply their skills and knowledge is the music classes where students use community performances and competitions as a way to apply their learning. (self-study, teachers, students, parents)

Teachers regularly use student self-assessments and self-reflection as part of their instructional approach, providing regular opportunities for students to engage in these activities throughout the school year. For example, English teachers use writing rubrics to have students assess

themselves prior to the completion of essays. In math classes, students peer evaluate, and science labs are self-assessed. For one science research paper, the guiding criteria list has a column for both student and teacher evaluation. Students say they are often asked to peer edit writing and peer evaluate group work. In French and Spanish classes, students are asked to self-evaluate. They must score themselves, justify these scores, and write an improvement plan. In the third quarter, they are asked to revisit this self-evaluation and prove and explain the amount or lack of progress. (students, teachers, student work samples)

Feedback from a variety of sources to improve instruction is not consistently used at Belchertown High School. While the faculty members are willing to make adjustments according to feedback from members of the school community, there is a limited number of formal opportunities to gather feedback from other teachers, students, supervisors, or parents. Faculty members report that it is difficult to find the time necessary to work with their peers. They say that most collaboration takes place between classes, before or after school, at lunches, and in the copy room. Although students work with their teachers and often share their thoughts about a particular lesson, they do not provide teachers with a formal commentary on instruction. While some teachers employ surveys or end-of-course reviews, these are not widely used by the faculty. Parents, too, report that they do not regularly provide feedback to the teachers. When interviewed, parents explain that they feel welcome to offer input but are rarely solicited to do so. From a supervisory standpoint, teachers value the opinions of the administrators but report that the teacher evaluation process is not consistently implemented. There are times when the administrators have not been able to complete the evaluation process with all teachers. Although teachers recognize that administrators are taking on a variety of roles that limit the time available for evaluation, they would value the chance to gain administrators' thoughts and opinions on a more consistent basis. Without an ongoing, formal means of gaining feedback from other teachers, students, parents, and supervisors, the teachers at Belchertown High School will have difficulty improving their instructional practices. (teachers, parents, students, self-study)

Teachers at Belchertown High School are experts in their content areas, knowledgeable about current research on effective instructional approaches, and reflective about their own practices. According to the self-study report, 98% of teachers hold bachelor's degrees in their teaching fields. In addition, 34 teachers hold masters degrees, and one has an doctorate. Approximately 82% of students feels their teachers know the materials for their classes. In addition, the faculty members pride themselves on their efforts to achieve a high level of pedagogical and discipline-specific knowledge. In order to maintain their expertise, teachers enroll in classes, utilize membership in national curricular organizations, and participate in summer course work focused on their content area. Although self-motivated and necessarily approached on an individual basis, these efforts allow teachers to maintain a high level of effectiveness in their instruction. (teachers, self-study, students, Endicott survey)

Discussion of instructional strategies is an important, yet informal part of the professional culture at BHS. Teachers value discussions with their peers and appreciate learning from their experiences; however, discussion of instructional strategies does not take place in a regular, scheduled manner. Rather, these conversations take place when initiated by faculty members and often happen during lunch, prior to the start of the school, or at the end of the school day. Formal discussions between teachers rarely take place, varying in frequency from once a month

to once a year. The exception to this occurs when teachers are assigned a mentor or when they act as a mentor for another teacher. Through this relationship, faculty members have the opportunity to share information about instruction formally; however, this collaboration generally does not continue following the completion of the year-long mentoring assignment. Teachers cite a lack of professional development time and resources as the primary obstacles to collaborating with their peers. Though the teachers at BHS appreciate the value of discussion of instructional strategies, the lack of a formalized approach to this prevents it from being a significant part of the professional culture at the high school. (self-study, teachers, Endicott survey)

Technology is integrated into and supportive of learning at Belchertown High School. Some of the more common uses of technology at BHS include using classroom televisions to display material from the teacher's computer, liquid crystal display (LCD) projectors, integration of audio or visual clips from the Internet, and the use of computer labs as a means for students to further their study of a topic. Some teachers also use such technology as online discussion boards, SMART Boards™, or online tutorials. Students are familiar with these examples of technology and are regularly expected to use this technology as part of their learning experiences. They may also be asked to use technology to create Power Point presentations, create compact discs or digital video discs, or to use Microsoft Excel as part of a lesson plan. Students and teachers regularly make use of the library/media center's computers or other resources which can be checked out from its collection. There are 450 computers in the building, including one for each teacher and three student computers per classroom. There are numerous LCD projectors and three SMART Boards™. Although technology is widely used, students, teachers, and administrators express concern that some of the technological infrastructure is becoming outdated. Many of the computers are six years old and often do not function properly. An upgrade of the computers is planned for the near future to address some of these concerns. Despite these concerns about the aging technology, teachers integrate the technology available to them as an important part of the instruction at BHS. (panel presentation, school tour, teachers, students)

Professional development at BHS has not assisted teachers in the improvement of instructional practices. There are limited opportunities throughout the year for the faculty and staff to work with presenters, to utilize knowledgeable staff members as presenters, or to collaborate in an effort to improve their instructional methods. Additionally, teachers report that there are few funds available for them to participate in offsite professional development activities. If they attend conferences or workshops, teachers often must pay for these offerings themselves. The available district funds are distributed through a lottery system, making it difficult for teachers to plan for these activities as they are unsure if they will be reimbursed for their expense. Furthermore, there is a disconnect between the perception of the faculty, the building-level administration, and the central office administration in the area of professional development. The superintendent provides a detailed plan of professional development activities at the beginning of each school year; however, the teachers report that meeting time that may be reserved for a specific type of development is often used for other purposes. In this fashion, the professional development plan for the school is not focused on particular areas of need nor consistent, nor supported by follow-ups. As a result, the professional development at Belchertown High School has not assisted teachers in their improvement of instructional strategies. (professional development schedule, teachers, principal, superintendent)

The teacher supervision and evaluation practices at Belchertown High School have not been employed consistently and have not served to improve the instructional methods used by teachers. According to district guidelines, teachers without professional status should be evaluated three times per year and professional status teachers should be evaluated every two years. This has not taken place consistently. Teachers appreciate the feedback they receive from the building administrators, but they perceive the administrators to be too busy to provide the required number of evaluations. They clearly express interest in making this a more reliable means to improve their practices. Recently, evaluation forms have been developed that teachers say are streamlined and easier to use. They are hopeful that this will increase the frequency of evaluation. Especially when considering the limited number of professional development offerings, teachers express hopefulness that supervision and evaluation can be used to improve their instructional approaches. As a result of the inconsistency and irregularity of these teacher supervision and evaluation processes, and the absence of collegial discussion and support, enhancement of student learning and meeting students needs via improved instruction is not taking place as it should. (teachers, self-study, principal, superintendent)

COMMENDATIONS

1. The use of instructional strategies that align with the school's mission statement and expectations for student learning
2. The efforts of teachers to personalize instruction, to engage students as active learners, and to engage students as self-directed learners
3. The opportunities provided for students to engage in higher-order thinking, to apply their knowledge, and to use self-assessment as a tool for learning
4. The qualified, knowledgeable, and dedicated teaching staff
5. The use of technology as an important element of instruction

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Acquire and use feedback from a variety of sources as a means of improving instruction
2. Design and implement a plan for teachers to engage in formal discussions about instructional strategies so that such discussion becomes part of the professional culture of the school.
3. Ensure that teachers in all classes consistently employ instructional practices that make connections across disciplines and provide opportunities for students to apply knowledge and skills
4. Provide professional development specifically aimed at helping teachers to improve their instructional practices
5. Ensure that supervision and evaluation practices are employed consistently as a way to support the instructional development of teachers

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

4

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

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

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

CONCLUSIONS

Belchertown High School is beginning to formalize assessment of school-wide and individual student progress in achieving the academic expectations in the mission based on school-wide rubrics. Recently, the school developed rubrics that relate to each of its six academic expectations for student learning. In addition, a growing number of faculty members have made efforts to use these rubrics when evaluating student progress. There is, however, no specific process nor formal mandate for the use of these rubrics. Several teachers state that, while the rubrics are available, they have had no formal opportunity to discuss how they should be utilized. Additionally, there is a lack of clarity regarding which classes and departments are responsible for the different expectations. In developing the program of studies, some efforts were made to link the expectations to areas of accountability, but this is not completed consistently across the curriculum. Additionally, teachers are unclear of how they should be expected to evaluate students in these areas. As a result, students are not consistently assessed on their achievement of the academic expectations. (teachers, students, self-study, administrators)

Belchertown High School does not have a formal program in place to measure school-wide achievement of the civic and social expectations for student learning. Although it recognizes that this process is not currently in place, the school points to a variety of ways in which students have the opportunity to achieve these expectations. Furthermore, the school's positive culture of civic and social engagement is widely demonstrated through student involvement in athletics, band, and clubs such as the humanities club and the Gay-Straight Alliance. Thematic classroom projects, such as the Algebra I stock market analysis project and community service projects, such as those conducted by L.E.A.F (Local Environmental Action Force), provide further opportunities. Despite these student achievements, the school must have a formal process to gather data regarding the student's and school's accomplishment of civic and social expectations and a recognized system of responsibility for analysis and use of school and student data so that the school be able to measure student success in these areas and publish the results to students and community. (self-study, teachers, students)

Many assignments including projects, essays, prompts, and course materials explicitly state the learning expectations that will be assessed in the work. This information is presented to students in a variety of ways. In some cases, teachers provide students with this information at the start of each class as a way to focus on the main idea of the lesson. At other times, teachers will provide the students with a syllabus that outlines the specific learning goals to be addressed in individual assignments and throughout the year. Students also sometimes receive this information in the details or instructions of assignments. Students are aware of the academic expectations and recognize that their class work and homework connect to them in a general way. However, they report that teachers rarely provide them with assignments that specifically explain the link to the academic expectations. Teachers, too, report that they address the academic expectations in a general sense, especially when introducing the students to the course and when planning the year's learning activities;

however, they recognize that they are most likely to articulate the course-specific learning expectations when assigning student work. Through the teachers' efforts, students are able to identify the course-specific learning goals on which they are assessed. Furthermore, they have a general understanding of how the academic expectations connect to their learning activities. However, students do not regularly receive a clarification of how assignments and class work connect to the school-wide academic expectations. (classroom observation, student work, teachers, students, administrators, self-study)

Teachers at Belchertown High School regularly provide their students with course-specific rubrics upon which classroom assessment is based. Seventy-seven percent of students states that teachers clearly explain what they need to do to receive a particular grade on assignments. Furthermore, 88% of parents believes that their child clearly understands criteria for grades. Teachers attribute these high percentages in part to the common use of rubrics as an assessment tool. They report that a great deal of effort has taken place on individual and department-wide levels to incorporate the use of rubrics as an effective assessment tool. While the use of course-specific rubrics is common at BHS, the use of the school-wide rubrics as a means to assess student work is not as widespread. Teachers' assignments usually address the goals of the curriculum rather than the academic expectations for student learning. As a result, teachers report that the school-wide rubrics are sometimes too general to be effectively employed as an assessment tool. They report that in some cases they have adapted the school-wide rubric so that it more effectively meets the needs of their course. As a result of these practices, students have a clear understanding of the course-specific goals on which they will be assessed although they do not fully understand how they are being assessed on the school-wide learning expectations. (student work, students, parents, self-study, Endicott survey, teachers)

Teachers use a variety of assessment strategies to determine student knowledge, skills, and competencies and to assess student growth over time. Teachers at Belchertown High School offer students multiple ways to express their knowledge and skills. Some of these activities include hands-on activities and projects, essays, research projects, political cartoons, response papers, speeches, presentations, evaluation of Internet sites, peer-assessed work, and many other assignments in addition to standard quizzes and tests. Student interviews showed that the students appreciate these opportunities and make frequent use of alternate ways to demonstrate their competency. They recognize that teachers are aware of different learning styles and that they provide their classes with assignments that address their individual needs. They feel confident that student assessment reflects the skills, competencies, and knowledge of varied learners. This is further supported by the Endicott survey which cites that 81.2% of the students believes that the teachers use a variety of methods to assess learning. (self-study, teachers, students, classroom observations, Endicott survey)

Teachers at Belchertown High School value the importance of professional collaboration but do not regularly or formally collaborate to discuss student work and the results of student assessments. Common planning time and departmental time are rarely afforded for the purpose of reviewing assessment strategies. Teachers report that professional meeting time is rarely spent on assessment and that departmental meetings do not take place regularly. Teachers have expressed an interest in improving communication, specifically in the area of

assessment. They report that when they meet incidentally with their peers, they are apt to discuss professional practices. While these conversations are valuable, they do not take place on a scheduled basis and they are not documented nor shared with all faculty members. As a result of this lack of collaboration, teachers are unable to use the collaborative review of student assessment as a way to adjust the curriculum and to improve instructional strategies. (teachers, self-study, administrators)

The school's professional development program does not provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate in developing a broad range of student assessment strategies. While twenty-five after-school meetings and two full days (total of 31 sessions) are appropriated for professional development purposes, none of these sessions has been dedicated to assessment strategies, the development and implementation of school-wide rubrics, or the use of assessment to drive curriculum and instruction. Teachers express interest in professional development opportunities in these areas, and they recognize the importance of training in the area of assessment. Without the provision of professional development in assessment, teachers will have a limited opportunity to improve their assessment practices and students will not benefit. (teachers, Self-study, administrators)

As the process to formalize the assessment of school-wide learning expectations develops, Belchertown High School will be able to more effectively communicate their students' achievements. While the school regularly provides information about the students' achievement on course-specific or state-mandated assessments, this is not a common practice with the academic expectations. Currently, the school relies on teachers' individual efforts as the primary means of communication of achievement of the academic expectations. Students report that they do not regularly receive feedback regarding their achievement of the six academic expectations and that they do not receive any feedback on their achievement of the social and civic expectations for student learning. The school is effective in communicating a variety of information to the students, parents, and community through various media including local newspapers, Edline, parent-teacher conferences, a monthly newsletter, and the school website. However, the school does not measure, track, or present quantitative or qualitative data on individual student progress towards the academic expectations, nor does it present the school's progress as a whole towards these goals. As a result, students, parents, and community members are unaware of the school's progress in these areas. (student work, teachers, administrators, self-study, parents)

COMMENDATIONS

1. The initial efforts of the school in beginning the process of formally assessing student progress to assess school-wide and individual progress in achieving the academic expectations
2. The teachers' explanations of how classroom activities and assessments address course-specific learning goals
3. The use of course-specific rubrics as an assessment tool
4. The use of a variety of assessment strategies to determine student knowledge, skills, and competencies

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Develop the process to assess school-wide and individual student progress in achieving the academic expectations in the mission based on school-wide rubrics**
2. **Create and implement a process to use data to assess the success of the students and the school in achieving the civic and social learning expectations**
3. **Ensure that all teachers base classroom assessment of student learning on the use of school-wide rubrics**
4. **Provide teachers with formal opportunities to collaborate in the area of assessment**
5. **Provide professional development opportunities for the expansion of teachers' assessment strategies**
6. **Establish a process by which individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school expectations for student learning can be reported to students, their families, and the community**

SUPPORT STANDARDS

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION
SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING
COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

SUPPORT STANDARD

5

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

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

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

CONCLUSIONS

The principal of Belchertown High School has autonomy and authority in leading the school towards the achievement of the mission and expectations for student learning. Members of the school committee report that there is effective communication between the principal and the school committee and central office. There is a school committee representative who serves as a liaison with the Belchertown School Council. This facilitates communication among the principal, the school committee, and the central office specifically as it pertains to the budget process and new initiatives or proposals at the high school. The superintendent states that he supports the principal's initiatives for professional development and curriculum coordination. The Endicott Survey indicated that 82.9% of the faculty believes that the principal has appropriate responsibility, autonomy, and authority in leading the achievement of the school's mission. One of the ways that the principal has exercised her autonomy is through the determination of where to add four new faculty members in the upcoming school year. As a result of this autonomy, the principal is allowed the authority to lead Belchertown High School toward further achievement of the mission and expectations. (self-study, administrators, school committee members, teachers, Endicott survey)

Teachers, students, and parents agree that the principal is effective at providing leadership, direction, and focus on student learning at Belchertown High School. She is highly visible and makes a conscious effort to know the students at Belchertown High School. As an example, the principal studies the middle school yearbook to know students' names by the time they enter the school. She is fair in her interactions with students and faculty members. She makes an effort to connect the work of the faculty to the mission statement and academic, civic, and social expectations by fostering a positive and respectful atmosphere. She provides consistent positive reinforcement through birthday recognitions, displays of gratitude, and recognition of academic, extra-curricular, or personal accomplishment for all of the students and teachers. She is open to suggestions that promote student learning and is always willing to meet with a student or faculty member when requested. In addition, students, parents, and teachers praise her work as a communicator, especially through her "Monday morning memos" and her work to celebrate the success of the students. As a result, ideas are freely shared and communicated within and amongst the faculty. The culture of Belchertown High School is directly impacted in a positive way through the principal's efforts to create a supportive, student-centered learning environment. In some areas, however, there are opportunities to further develop shared vision, direction, and focus as a means to impact student learning. Especially in the areas of curriculum development, professional development, and supervision and evaluation, Belchertown High School will look to the principal to foster the support and provide the organization necessary to augment its current practices. (self-study, teachers, students)

In addition to the principal, teachers and the assistant principal provide leadership that is essential to the improvement of the school. As an example, the assistant principal has recently connected the civic and social expectations to disciplinary referrals. This change has focused student behavior on the civic and social expectations of the mission. In so doing, he has initiated a process to "review, evaluate, collect, and analyze data on civic and social expectations" in accordance with an initiative from the most recent school improvement plan. Teachers report that the rules and policies are consistently enforced, and they are supported in their decisions. Department heads meet weekly with the principal. They communicate

information from those meetings to their respective members, and they also take departmental ideas back to the principal. Teachers feel they are represented in the decision-making process, and they are also encouraged to present and discuss their ideas about school improvement. However, one area in which the department chairs and coordinators are limited in their leadership role is in department meetings which vary in frequency from department to department. The focus of the department heads centers on the budget process and communication between the administrative team and their respective department members. The expansive roles of both administrators hinder their ability to focus on teaching, learning, and supervision while helping students achieve the mission. As a result, the inconsistency of department meetings combined with the administrative team's focus on daily management issues impedes a unified approach to improvement which results in few clearly defined leadership opportunities for the faculty. (self-study, teachers, department heads, school improvement plan, administrators)

The organization of the educational programs at Belchertown High School does not fully support the school's mission and expectations for student learning. Course programming is limited in the elective areas. There are no health or consumer science courses and few offerings in business and computer technology. Students are scheduled into directed studies to fill their schedules, and there are currently thirty-six school-wide directed studies that are used for this purpose. Furthermore, there is a limited number of advanced placement courses that are available to the school's 750+ students, and foreign language classes receive no paraprofessional support for students with individual education plans (IEPs). The school made efforts to address its concern about the educational programs in the 2007-2008 Belchertown School Improvement Plan which articulates the need for additional courses that address the learning styles of all students. The addition of budgeted art, music, foreign language, and mathematics teachers for the 2008-2009 school year will assist in achieving the school's mission, yet these additions will not fulfill all staffing needs and the school does not yet provide educational programs that are consistent with its mission statement. (self-study, students, school improvement plan, teachers, administrators)

Student grouping patterns at Belchertown High School foster heterogeneity. Students are able to select courses at different levels of rigor. Also, the school uses an open enrollment policy which enables most students to self-select their academic program based on interest, motivation, and ability. Students are encouraged to take the highest level of courses that will provide the most challenge to them. Thus, students have freedom to direct their own academic pursuits. In addition, students with IEPs are included in a typical learning environment as often as possible in an effort to provide them with an enriching learning experience. Based on these practices, students at Belchertown High School are grouped in a way that appropriately reflects the composition of the student population. (self-study, students, teachers, administrators)

The schedule at Belchertown High School supports the implementation of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment of student learning. The schedule is designed to provide students with a variety of learning options. Its rotation facilitates learning opportunities for students at various times in the school day thus reflecting research about adolescent learning patterns. The longer block provides opportunities for varied activities and differentiated instruction. The longer block is utilized for enrichment activities, labs, technology integration, and a depth of

exploration into the subject matter. The majority of faculty members and students feels the rotation is beneficial to student learning. (self-study, students, teachers, administrators)

Parents, students, and teachers feel that they have a role in promoting and contributing to a positive atmosphere at Belchertown High School. Parents, teachers, and students may participate with the Belchertown School Council to collaborate with the administrative team in meaningful ways. The school council shapes the Belchertown School Improvement Plan while also providing input and oversight into the annual budget process as well as advising on a variety of activities and programs offered at the school. Students report that they enjoy the opportunity to be heard by the administration. The student council and class officer representatives are open and accessible to their peers and meet with the principal frequently to discuss school wide issues that affect the student body. The BHS Humanities Club, as one example of the many student clubs, organizes activities that seek to provide service to the community. The student clubs and organizations are open to any student at various times in the school year. Over ninety percent of the faculty feels comfortable submitting concerns, ideas, and opinions that contribute to the overall atmosphere of Belchertown High School. Most constituents feel they have a voice and role in promoting the positive atmosphere at the school. (self-study, teachers, students, parents, administrators)

In many cases, student loads at Belchertown High School are too high to allow for effective teaching and learning. Teachers express concern that they are not able to meet the learning needs of many students at Belchertown High School. Although a number of teachers reports that their student loads are manageable, some teachers can have class sizes that they consider too large to allow for effective instruction. This limits the teachers' ability to personalize and provide for authentic assessment and feedback especially in the area of writing. Nearly fifty percent of the faculty reports they do not have time to address individual student needs in their classes. In addition, large class size impedes the ability of the teachers to use varied instructional assessment and instructional strategies because they have a limited opportunity to react to the needs of a large group of learners. Large class sizes in some sections and a dearth of elective offerings, create it is challenges to meeting the learning needs of individual students. (self-study, teachers, students, administrators)

There is no formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult member of the school community in addition to the school guidance counselor who personalizes each student's educational experience, knows the student well, and assists the student in achieving the school-wide expectations for student learning. As the student population at Belchertown High School grows, faculty members increasingly believe that students would benefit from a program of this nature. Although there is no formal program in place at the high school, there is a number of supports that help to connect students to faculty and staff members. For instance, there is a strong sense of community in the school, creating an environment where students feel comfortable seeking out their teachers to clarify confusion or to gain assistance with their concerns. Also, in the coming school year, the students' experience will be further personalized by the guidance department's plan to meet with students at least six times per year in a classroom setting. Nevertheless, without a specific advisory, there is no guarantee that each student receives the personal attention that would ensure the successful achievement of the expectations for student learning. (students, teachers, self-study, survey results)

Although the professional staff recognizes the importance of collaboration, there are currently few opportunities to collaborate across disciplines and department areas. Teachers express a desire to collaborate with their colleagues in a more formal manner. Collaboration does take place in department meetings, but these meetings are held inconsistently from department to department. In addition, discussions about teaching and learning most often occur in the corridor, lunch periods, and floor-level preparation time rather than in a formalized manner. Faculty members are eager to have a process or system to allow for more collaboration within and across the various departments. The lack of a formal process of professional collaboration challenges the school's ability to fully support student learning and teacher effectiveness. (self-study, student, teachers, department heads, administrators)

The faculty and staff at Belchertown High School are actively involved in promoting the well-being and learning of the student population. Teachers have high regard for their students and note that they are respectful, polite, and courteous. There is a distinct sense of genuine care and concern for student well-being that transcends departmental lines or job descriptions. Faculty members and students interact warmly and with courtesy in the corridors and classrooms. This high level of interaction serves to further advance a school that is centered on what is right for its students. Likewise, faculty members promote student learning while encouraging high expectations for all students. The mission is clearly displayed in every classroom, and it is evident that teachers enjoy their subject matter and have enthusiasm in sharing the learning process with their students. As a result, teachers, parents, administrators, and students have great pride in their school and community. (self-study, students, teachers, department heads, administrators)

The success of the students of Belchertown High School is regularly celebrated in a variety of ways. The entire school promotes student achievement in academics and extra-curricular activities by postings on the common wall spaces, in the classrooms, and in daily announcements. From the building's entrance onward, banners demonstrate academic success on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) and athletic achievements. Students have the opportunity to display their skills and strengths in bi-annual spirit days. There are several awards banquets and ceremonies that also recognize the efforts of Belchertown students. The Oriole VIP award recognizes students who contribute to a positive school climate. Furthermore, the local newspapers (*The Daily Hampshire Gazette*, *The Springfield Republican*, and *The Belchertown Sentinel*) actively support the endeavors of the student population with frequent articles on a wide variety of activities and topics. Through these efforts to promote the success of students, a sense of pride and accomplishment is prevalent at Belchertown High School. (self-study, students, teachers, administrators)

The climate of Belchertown High School is positive, safe, respectful, and supportive. Teachers report that students are respectful, the environment is safe, and the disciplinary process is clear and reflective of the mission. The disciplinary referral process is connected directly to the civic and social expectations of the mission so that when a student is referred to the main office for disciplinary consequences, the student must reflect on the mission and how he or she can work to meet it in future behavior. Likewise, teachers process the disciplinary referral by indicating the areas where they felt the student did not meet the standards of the mission. This new process has placed a direct focus on the mission's civic and social expectations for the entire faculty. The principal and vice-principal are visible, compassionate, and caring. They set a

positive and respectful model for the entire school community. The principal posts photographs of students in a variety of situations and activities. These photographs serve to enhance a focus on a positive, caring environment. Students attempt to foster continued respect with activities such as the Day of Silence. In addition, the faculty and staff members display the school's mission, its colors, and the Belchertown Oriole throughout the entire building. The sense of ownership and civic pride is palpable throughout the entire building. (self-study, students, teachers, administrators)

The school committee recognizes its role in supporting the school's mission statement and expectations for student learning. The principal and superintendent communicate regularly and meaningfully with the school committee on this topic. Members of the school committee affirm the core values identified in the mission statement. In addition, they are supportive of the expectations for student learning by taking an active role in curriculum and personnel/policy subcommittees. Their understanding is also evidenced in their approval of the school improvement plan and the five-year district plan, both of which were designed with specific attention to the high school's mission and expectations. Teachers report that it remains a challenge to secure a budget that would implement all aspects of the mission statement. However, the addition of four teachers at the high school and a district curriculum coordinator is widely viewed as a positive development in this ongoing struggle. While there are ongoing challenges in securing additional funding, the school committee assists the students' accomplishment of the mission statement and expectations for student learning through its support of these documents. (self-study, students, teachers, administrators, school committee members)

COMMENDATIONS

1. The provision of sufficient autonomy and authority to the principal to lead the school
2. The principal's visible and positive leadership style which leads to open communication of ideas
3. The leadership provided by teachers and administrators other than the principal
4. The connection of the civic and social expectations of the mission statement to the disciplinary referral system
5. The provision of student grouping patterns that foster heterogeneity
6. The provision of a schedule which meets the learning needs of many students
7. The meaningful roles fulfilled by students, parents, and members of the school community in the decision-making process
8. The diverse and dedicated efforts of the staff in promoting the well-being and learning of students
9. The prominent display of student achievement
10. The pride, spirit, and positive climate that permeate the Belchertown High School community
11. The support of the school board in the implementation of the school's mission statement and expectations for student learning

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish increased leadership from the principal in the areas of curriculum development, professional development, and supervision and evaluation as means to furthering a shared vision, direction, and focus on student learning
2. Use increased teacher leadership at the department level to ensure regular communication and meeting times between teachers of the same discipline
3. Increase comprehensive programming to meet the mission's academic expectations.
4. Decrease the student loads of teachers as a means to improving teaching and learning
5. Design and implement a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult member of the school community in addition to the guidance counselor who personalizes each student's educational experience, knows the student well, and assists the student in achieving the school-wide expectations for student learning
6. Establish a formal means to promote professional collaboration within and between academic departments

6

SUPPORT STANDARD

SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

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

ALL STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

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

6. Student records, including health and immunization records, shall be maintained in a confidential and secure manner consistent with federal and state law.
7. There shall be sufficient certified/licensed personnel and support staff to provide effective counseling, health, special education, and library media services.

Guidance Services

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

Health Services

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

6

SUPPORT STANDARD

SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

LIBRARY INFORMATION SERVICES

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

Special Education Services

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

CONCLUSIONS

Student support services at Belchertown High School (BHS) play an important role in assisting with the achievement of the school's mission statement and expectations for student learning. The guidance department provides a variety of services that promote the achievement, scholarship, and well-being of students. The health department supports the mission through provision of support and services that promote student health and safety. The library media center (LMC) program utilizes its facilities, resources, staff, and policies in order to promote the school's mission and expectations. Special education services address the mission and expectations by providing students with the accommodations and modifications necessary to promote this success and to foster the contributions of all students. All of these support services work collectively to support the mission statement and the achievement of the learning expectations. (self-study, department leaders, teachers, students)

Funds are not consistently provided to support the resources, programs, and services that ensure all students have an equal opportunity to achieve the school's expectations for student learning although adequate resources are available to support student achievement in some instances. For example, the library media center (LMC) is appropriately staffed and provisioned. The LMC provides equitable access to information resources, technology and services. Its programs and services are aligned with the mission and expectations, and all students have the opportunity to access the library as a result of the LMC's flexible schedule and before and after school hours. The print, non-print, electronic resources, and technology provide a comprehensive collection of resources that meet the needs of students. However, other student services would benefit from additional support. In the guidance department, two guidance counselors and a guidance chairperson serve nearly 800 students, resulting in student case loads that challenge the counselors' ability to provide a comprehensive range of guidance services. The school to career program has been significantly reduced to eleven hours, affecting students' opportunities to gain experiences related to vocational interests. Staffing reductions caused health classes to be cut with resulting impacts on guidance and nursing staff members as students are not now as knowledgeable about health related topics. Some of these limitations affect student opportunities for academic challenge and success. As a result of the school's inability to fully allocate appropriate resources, not all student services are able to fully support the school's mission statement and expectations for student learning. (teachers, department chairs, guidance counselors, school nurse, library media specialist)

Guidance counselors, the school nurse, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals work cooperatively with other faculty members in addressing academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of students, thereby enhancing student learning. The professionals representing the various support services collaborate informally in response to immediate student needs that affect student learning. For instance, special educators and guidance counselors work with teachers in order to ensure that students are receiving the appropriate academic accommodations. Also, the guidance department and the school nurse have a very positive and supportive working relationship. The nurse has an extensive psychiatric background which is utilized frequently. Paraprofessionals also provide students with valuable services by working with counselors and teachers in meeting students' needs. Despite the cooperative nature of student support services at Belchertown High School, however, limitations in resources affect the amount of time available to collaborate. Nevertheless, the supportive nature of these

services assists in meeting the needs of BHS students. (self-study, school support staff, teachers, students)

Not all school resources for learning are regularly evaluated and revised to support improved student learning. While school resources are adjusted in response to student needs and to support student learning, many services are not consistently evaluated. Administrators do not regularly meet with support services personnel to evaluate the services provided and to make necessary revisions, and evaluation standards by which the school can determine the success of these services are not clearly established. The exception to this statement is the LMC program which is evaluated using the standards of the Massachusetts School Library Media Association (MSLMA), the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and the Massachusetts State Frameworks for Language Arts. Counselors, nurses, special educators, and the library media specialist are reflective of their practices and make efforts to adjust to students' needs on an ongoing basis. However, the lack of a formal evaluation plan in some areas affects the school's ability to ensure that these services are effectively meeting the changing needs of the student population. (self-study, school support staff members, teachers)

Effective and ongoing communication between parents and student support personnel takes place in a variety of ways. The utilization of the EDline Grade Book on-line program provides parents and students with up-to-date information about academic performance. Parents report that this is a well utilized program; students and parents can access this information at any time; and teachers update this information frequently and consistently. The guidance department sponsors college planning forums and financial aid nights for parents and students. They publicize mental health resources through the use of pamphlets and posters. The bulletin boards and displays show high quality work in which students have participated in. The library's website is an important communication for the library's programs and resources and the LMC is also accessible on Edline. The LMC program is included in the 8th Grade Open House for perspective 9th graders. Services are promoted via pamphlets, brochures, bookmarks, bulletin boards, displays, newsletters, and other ways. LMC materials are available for students and teachers, and there is on-going communication with teachers concerning resources and services. Through all forms of communication, the resources and departments at Belchertown High School provide information for all school constituents and an opportunity to partner with parents and the community in their students' education. (self-study, students, school support staff, parents, teachers)

The Belchertown High School Student Service departments maintain student records in a confidential and secure manner consistent with federal and state law. Belchertown High School stores student records in various locations throughout the school. Current academic records are located in the guidance office in a separate room. Cumulative folders are stored in a locked fireproof file cabinet. Student health records with information regarding immunizations, medications, medical conditions, and physical examinations are kept in a computer program with secure back ups. The library's catalog and patron data system is a confidential system for tracking library use. Students receive individual overdue notices. Special education records are stored in a secure manner consistent with federal guidelines. Timelines for records to be destroyed are in compliance with mandates as well. (self-study, observations, facility tour)

In some areas, Belchertown High School has been able to provide staffing that effectively supports its students. The library media center is run by a certified library media specialist, and the special education department is staffed with teachers and paraprofessionals who assist in the process of teaching and learning. Also, the school resource officer is at the high school for two days each week. He supports the administrators in their work with students and serves as the advisor for the organization Students against Destructive Decisions (SADD). He also assists as a chaperone on school trips. Despite the provision of these support staff members, there are unmet needs. The BHS guidance department has not been able to provide sufficient staffing for effective counseling services.

Managing the daily needs of the students in addition to the larger goals of the guidance department has become extremely challenging, particularly in the areas of crisis management, mental health issues, and career counseling. Without sufficient staffing, the BHS guidance department must struggle to provide adequate guidance services for all of its students. (self-study, guidance counselors, teachers, administrators)

The school attempts to provide a wide range of guidance services, including individual and group meetings with counseling personnel; personal, career, and college counseling; student course selection assistance; collaborative outreach to community and area mental health agencies; and social service providers. The expansive range of services and the limited staff prevent the guidance department from providing these services to all students on a consistent basis. Counselors meet with students frequently and informally to discuss concerns, assess academic progress, select courses, and formulate plans for the future, but high caseloads do not allow guidance counselors to meet with each student on a one-to-one basis at least once per school year. This limits their ability to consistently provide personal, career, and college counseling to all students. Currently, 50% of parents believes that that their child's guidance counselor is able to provide assistance in these areas. The counselors will address this need in the 2008-2009 year, by meeting with students in a guidance seminar that will meet regularly to address the developmental needs of each grade level. These seminars will create additional time constraints for a department already limited in resources. The guidance department has built a strong support network of community, area mental health agencies, and social service providers. Counselors refer students to outside agencies to assist students in crisis. Counselors are involved in the special education services by scheduling students appropriately, attending IEP meetings, and assisting in monitoring academic progress. However, some students do not receive appropriate support for career, college, personal, and course selection concerns. (self-study, parents, students, school support staff, Endicott survey)

The school nurse provides the students at Belchertown High School with a variety of health services. The nurse meets with members of the guidance department and school administration to accommodate at-risk students. Preventive health services such as postural screenings, interval health surveys, and height and weight checks are provided for all students. Students are also offered a flu vaccination, and direct intervention services such as smoking cessation programs, when necessary. Referrals for medical services are handled on an ongoing basis. The nurse communicates to teachers any medical accommodations that need to be made in the classroom setting. A 911 emergency response plan is in place and has been effectively used, and a revised comprehensive crisis plan is in place and is utilized well by support staff members. Through these services, the school nurse provides valuable and necessary care to students at

Belchertown High School. Despite the accomplishments of the school nurse, however, the provision of support in the area of health services is a challenging responsibility that becomes increasingly demanding as the student population at BHS increases. In addition, the recent elimination of a health instructor limits the school's ability to provide some preventive health services. The combination of limited resources and the increasing needs of students may present a challenge to continue meeting the health needs of the student population. (school support staff, self-study, facility tour)

The library/information services program and materials are fully integrated into the school's curriculum and instructional program. The LMC's information literacy program is not taught in isolation, rather it is taught across the curriculum with projects and activities that are inquiry-based. The LMS has developed a unit/lesson plan that aids teachers as they integrate information literacy skills into lesson plans. There is a school-wide research rubric to evaluate student work. She participates in curricular meetings and has proposed embedding literacy skills into the new guidance department 9-12 seminars. The LMC's program is aligned with the course curriculum and provides a wide range of resources that reflects diverse needs in content, format and level which are needed for students' learning and instructors' teaching styles. Resources include audio books as an alternative or adjunct to print resources, video in different formats including DVDs and United-streaming, and the opportunity to incorporate different technologies as research tools. The library's technology includes a computer lab as well as a bank of computers in the library that provide access to the online library catalog, research databases, and multi-media production resources. The LMC's website is an important portal for research which can be accessed at any time from the Internet. Teachers and students have input into the selection of library media resources. The LMS meets with teachers to identify materials and a variety of resources for collection development. She also develops a variety of tools for successful use of the LMC's research capabilities. Research paper guides and online search guides are displayed with the research computer bank. Students also have input in the selection of library resources. The LMS provides students with policies outlined in the student handbook that promote good research habits and behaviors and include attention to the academic, social, and civic expectations. Teachers schedule classes in the library for research, and the LMS plans lessons with classroom teachers. The LMS has also developed lessons on web site evaluation which have been incorporated into many curriculum areas. The LMS seeks out teachers to identify needs and resources to support their instruction. There is also a professional collection of over 1,400 resources to serve the lifelong learning habits and needs of faculty members. The library media services fully integrated resources support teaching and learning at BHS. (self study, support staff, observation)

Library/information services personnel are knowledgeable about course curriculum and support its implementation. The LMS is involved in most meetings and workshop initiatives that involve curriculum. She also attends faculty, department, and department head meetings that involve issues pertaining to the LMC. She has a working knowledge of the curriculum as a result of her involvement with and ongoing work with teachers and students on assignments and projects. The Endicott survey found that 91.9% of teachers believes the school library personnel have the knowledge to assist with their curricular and instructional needs. The LMC has also integrated library resources and services into inter-disciplinary projects. One such project was the two-week Teaching American History Seminar which she attended with one of the social studies teachers resulting in curriculum changes. The library media specialist's

knowledge of course curriculum supports teachers in curriculum implementation. (Endicott survey, self-study, teachers)

A wide range of materials, technologies, and other library/information services that are responsive to the school's student population is available to students and faculty members and utilized to improve teaching and learning. The LMC provides over 15,000 print and non-print materials that include various reading levels and formats. The LMC's collection includes print, multimedia, CD_ROM, DVD, audio books, periodicals, newspapers, online research databases, an electronic card catalog, 40 computers, and a staff that is professional and knowledgeable. Also available are resources from the WGBY Educator's Services. The LMC's webpage is a comprehensive portal that supports research and instruction. The BHS LMC is a member of the Western Mass Regional Library System (WMRLS) which provides online research databases such as Infotrac, Literary Research Center, and Newsbank as well as inter-library loan for print and non-print from libraries of all types and locations. The library's collection offers materials that are racially, culturally, and ethnically diverse. The LMC audio book collection includes the audio versions of all titles that are part of the English curriculum. The Endicott survey found that 80.5% of the faculty feels they have sufficient access to technology. The survey also indicated that the LMC's print, non-print, and technology resources are adequate for students and teachers, and they are used to improve teaching and learning. Student responses indicated that 67.9% said the library has the materials they need. The LMS budget has endured various freezes and reductions over the years, and the new building funds provided much of the up-to-date curriculum-oriented resources. The LMS expressed concern that a strong and sustained financial commitment is imperative to support collection development in line with state and national standards. The wide range of resources give students and faculty members improved methods for teaching and learning. (survey, observation, teacher, students)

Students and faculty and support staff members have regular and frequent access to library/information services, facilities, and programs as an integral part of their educational experiences before, during, and after the school day. The LMC is an integral part of BHS. The open, bright, and welcoming facility provides a diverse and comprehensive collection of information resources. Students, teachers, and staff members make frequent use of the library's program and services. Library statistics show an average of over 1,000 student visits a week. Library sign-in sheets show there are some days when there are well over 300 student users. These statistics include students who use the library as part of a class or who come to the library from a directed study. The Endicott survey indicated that 45.8% of students used the library for class assignments, but copies of the library's sign-in sheets indicate this is a misleading statistic. The library's hours are clearly posted, and the library is open for student use before and after school. The hours are: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday – 7:45 – 3:15 and on Wednesday 7:45 – 4:00. The flexible schedule of the LMC allows maximum student use. (observations, self-study, survey)

The library/information services program fosters independent inquiry by enabling students and faculty members to use various school and community information resources and technologies. Students receive instruction and have myriad support materials available in the library to support independent use of the library's resources and technology. A handout explaining how to embed a streaming video clip into a power point presentation as well as the proper citation style is just an example of the many supportive resources provided to students.

Students and faculty members have access to the over 15,000 resources in the library as well as the online resources via the library's website. Teachers are made aware of resources via workshops, handouts, brochures, informational flyers, meetings, memos, and other informal communications. The LMC's use of community resources provides the opportunity for learning to take place outside of BHS. (evidence binder, Endicott survey, observation, teachers)

Policies are in place for the selection and removal of information resources and the use of technologies and the Internet. The LMC has a policy handbook which includes the materials selection and reconsideration policy, weeding guidelines, and forms for the reconsideration of library materials. The LMS uses standardized collection development tools such as School Library Journal, book awards, review sources, and bibliographies as well as input from students, faculty and staff members, and parents. Previews and trials of resources are also used. Resources are selected that align with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, the BHS mission and expectations for student learning, and national standards. Students must sign the district's acceptable use policy for use of technologies and the Internet. Filtering software is in place. Resources that are selected are aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. (BHS Library Policy Handbook, survey, support staff)

Belchertown High School provides special education services related to the identification, monitoring, and referral of students in accordance with local, state, and federal laws. A referral process is in place to identify students who may be in need of special education services. When served by an IEP, special education students are monitored by their liaison, usually a special education teacher with whom they have regular contact. Special education teachers know the needs of the students on their caseload and offer appropriate help as it is needed. The management of special education concerns is handled in accordance with local, state, and federal laws, and a file is maintained in a secure location for all students with disabilities. The school also makes efforts to keep parents fully informed about the variety of special education services that are available to students. (self-study, teachers, students, parents)

COMMENDATIONS

1. The student support services' dedicated work to help students achieve the mission statement and expectations for student learning
2. The provision of adequate resources to the library media center by consistent district funding
3. The collaboration of the student support personnel in addressing the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of students
4. The variety of means used to communicate regularly with students, parents, and school personnel about the types of available support services and the identified student needs
5. The confidential and secure storage of student records
6. The guidance counselors' provision of a range of guidance services
7. The full range of health services provided to the students by the school nurse
8. The full integration of the library media center's materials in the instructional program of the school
9. The knowledgeable library media center personnel
10. The wide range of materials provided by the library media center

11. The regular and frequent access to the library media center's resources for students and staff members
12. The wide range of strategies employed to enable students and faculty members to use various school and community information resources and technologies
13. The provision of policies for the selection and removal of information resources and the use of technologies and the Internet
14. The provision of special education services to meet the educational needs of all learners

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Provide appropriate resources to support the guidance department
2. Adjust the guidance counselors' caseloads to allow an effective provision of services
3. Provide sufficient staffing in the guidance department to meet the academic and emotional needs of students
4. Establish and implement a process by which all student support services are regularly reviewed and updated

7

SUPPORT STANDARD

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

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

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

CONCLUSIONS

Belchertown High School engages parents as partners in their student's education and encourages parents and students to be actively involved through a variety of methods. Parents are invited to participate in open house meetings with staff members at the beginning of the school year. In addition, throughout the year, teachers communicate with parents informally through e-mail and telephone. Transition meetings with parents of eighth graders are held two times a year: in August with an orientation meeting and in the spring with a meeting for course selection. Student handbooks and the program of studies provide written information for parents. Ongoing communication to parents throughout the year takes place through mailings and the Monday morning memos. Parents and students also have continual access to their child's grades and academic progress through Edline. Teachers update this information on a weekly basis. In addition, parents have opportunities to be involved through co-curricular and athletic support groups such as the Belchertown Band Boosters (BBB), the Belchertown Orioles Athletic Association (BOAA), and the football, hockey, and lacrosse associations. Other groups such as school council provide additional formal mechanisms for participation. Through these efforts, Belchertown High School fosters ongoing opportunities for parents and school to work as partners in the education of students. (self-study, parents, students, school committee)

Although currently limited by budget constraints, Belchertown High School is continuing to develop outreach programs with businesses, the community, and higher education. A dual enrollment partnership with Holyoke Community College has been instituted. A small number of students participates in a school-to-work program or in internships, but lack of funding has prevented the school from running career day, an activity focused on informing students about possible careers. Informal opportunities, especially with BHS Humanities Club members, provide methods for community outreach through such events as the Relay for Life, Toys for Tots, and the Monster Mash. Students are recipients of locally funded scholarships. Local businesses support such activities as the Students against Destructive Decisions (SADD) mock accident reenactment, drama performances, Project Runway, and the Local Environmental Action Force (LEAF) Battle of the Bands. Through continuing efforts to expand the current connections between local businesses, community members, and colleges and universities, Belchertown High School will be able to better meet the needs of the students. (self-study, teachers, guidance counselors, students)

The current school site ensures sufficient support for educational and support services programs. Belchertown High School is a three story structure with 175,825 square feet of space. The building has 782 students, yet it is built to house a student capacity of 1,000 students. Instructional spaces provide ample room and work space for students and teachers. In addition to its instructional spaces, the school has an 800 seat auditorium, a multi – dimensional athletic facility, a full music and choral suite, a well-lit airy cafeteria, and a library/media area designed for individual students' access as well as class use. The school's fields accommodate the existing athletic programs. The heating and cooling systems are sufficient but provide uneven heating and cooling in some rooms. Some teachers note extremes in heating and cooling in their classrooms that have existed since the building opened. In addition, teachers note that the sound that emanates from the air exchange delivery system is a distraction to their instruction. There are five computer labs including the library. Some classrooms have interactive SMART Boards™ and LCD projectors. Frequently voiced concerns center on the need for an upgrade in technology as no major improvements have taken place since the building was opened in 2002.

However, the school has recently upgraded the school surveillance system. The present facility affords ample support for student learning and support services. (facility tour, parents, teachers, self-study)

The school addresses all major federal and state laws as they arise and is in compliance with local, state, and federal regulations. Custodians routinely inspect heating, cooling, and electrical systems. Repairs to these systems that can be undertaken by custodians are completed in a timely manner. Major repairs are referred for contacted services through the central office. Although no written preventive maintenance plan exists, contracts with outside vendors to check such things as bleachers and basketball hoop stanchions are filled on an annual basis. Outside grounds work and plowing are done by the town's department of public works wthat works in collaboration with the head custodian. During monthly tours, building and grounds reports are completed by the head custodian working with the principal. The school is compliant in meeting local, state, and federal regulations. (facilities tour, custodians, cafeteria staff members, self-study)

Equipment is adequate and sufficient to maintain the building. The head custodian ensures that repairs are made in a consistent manner. Repairs that cannot be handled by the custodians and/or the maintenance staff person are contracted with outside vendors. The head custodian coordinates vendors. Technology repairs are coordinated by the building's information technology technician. The network administrator maintains and catalogues equipment through an online system. Upgrades to the network are recognized as essential to continue with the integration of technology. The librarian/media specialist is responsible for coordinating the audio visual equipment and cataloguing of library instructional resources. Repairs to audio visual equipment are completed annually as teachers submit their individual requests. Through the efforts of the custodians and the members of the school community, the school's equipment continues to be cared for in an appropriate and responsive manner. (facility tour, self-study, teachers, parents, administrators)

The maintenance, repair, and cleanliness of the school plant is appropriately managed and funded. The condition of the site and the number of custodial staff members allows for adequate and appropriate maintenance of the school facility. Six custodians, including a head custodian work three staggered shifts to provide sufficient coverage for cleaning the building and maintaining the grounds. The head custodian is responsive to the immediate repair needs in the building and to the concerns of staff members around these issues. A positive attitude and willingness to address all building and site maintenance issues immediately has provided a clean and pleasant facility for students and staff members. Building and site management ensures the appropriate maintenance, repair, and cleanliness of the school plant. (facility tour, self-study, parents, teachers, administrators)

The building and district leadership along with members of the school community have worked together to plan for future programs, enrollment changes, staffing, facility, and technological needs of Belchertown High School. The superintendent has developed a district-wide plan that establishes five district goals focusing on learning, environment, student achievement, curriculum, operations and policies, and community support and partnerships. In addition, the superintendent has submitted a five-year capital improvement plan although the high school has not been included in the plan because it is still new. A four-year educational technology

plan for the district has been developed. The plan addresses goals, sources of revenue, infrastructure, technical support, professional development, and instructional integration. The principal has developed a 2007 -2008 School Improvement Plan with nine goals that support the high school's mission statement. Numerous documents outlining long-range planning have been developed, yet there is not sufficient implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of these plans to address future growth and program needs. Substantial population growth has resulted in significant fiscal demand. Staffing and program increases have not kept pace with the current population growth. As a result of these financial problems, the district risks not being able to provide sufficient resources to fully fund Belchertown High School consistently. (self-study, administrators, department heads, teachers, parents)

The superintendent and school committee have worked to increase funding over the years in order to ensure adequate revenue to meet the population growth at Belchertown High School. However, while student enrollment has increased significantly during the last ten years with over 300 additional students, the district has not been able to keep pace as it has added only two new teaching positions. While the FY09 school budget allows the addition of new staff members and funding for some required technology upgrades, Belchertown High School still faces funding challenges to meet the program, technological, and staffing needs of the school. Staffing needs, in particular, are of significant importance to the high school. Currently forty-nine teachers serve nearly 800 students. This ratio leads to challenges in the student load of the teachers and the programs offered by the school. (school committee members, administrators, self-study, teachers, parents, students)

The budget process is collaborative and cooperative with a transparent approach to the development of the budget. A town official serves as a budget liaison and regularly attends budget meetings. The budget process begins with staff members submitting requests to their department heads who, in turn, submit their budgets to the principal. The principal prioritizes all budget requests based on such things as enrollment and program needs. The principal shares her budget requests with the school council and then presents her budget to the Superintendent who brings a district budget forward to the School Committee for approval in the spring. In the last few years, any requests for additional staff and/or programs have been withdrawn in the spring because of budget constraints brought forth in discussions with the finance committee and other town officials. The budget process is open and transparent, and all stakeholders have opportunities to voice their needs to the administrator. (school committee, principal, superintendent, self-study, teachers)

COMMENDATIONS

1. The many ways for parents and families to partner with the school in their students' education
2. The modern, aesthetically pleasing, well-maintained school site and physical plant which support and enhance all aspects of the educational program
3. The strong sense of pride and ownership of the new facility
4. The adherence of the physical plant and facilities to all applicable federal and state laws
5. The compliance of the physical plant and facilities with local fire, health, and safety regulations
6. The provision of equipment that allows for the adequate and sufficient maintenance of the building

7. The management of the school's maintenance, repair, and cleanliness
8. The ongoing planning to address the future needs of the school
9. The involvement of all stakeholders in the budget development process

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop formal partnerships for higher education opportunities for students
2. Ensure a budget that is adequate to meet current and future educational needs

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

This comprehensive evaluation report reflects the findings of the school's self-study and those of the visiting committee. It provides a blueprint for the faculty, administration, and other officials to use to improve the quality of programs and services for the students in Belchertown High School. The faculty, school board, and superintendent should be apprised by the building administration yearly of progress made addressing visiting committee recommendations. Since it is in the best interest of the students that the citizens of the district become aware of the strengths and limitations of the school and suggested recommendations for improvement, the Commission requires that the evaluation report be made public in accordance with the Commission's Policy on Distribution, Use, and Scope of the Visiting Committee Report.

A school's initial/continued accreditation is based on satisfactory progress implementing valid recommendations of the visiting committee and others identified by the Commission as it monitors the school's progress and changes which occur at the school throughout the decennial cycle. To monitor the school's progress in the Follow-Up Program, the Commission requires that the principal of Belchertown High School submit routine Two- and Five-Year Progress Reports documenting the current status of all evaluation report recommendations, with particular detail provided for any recommendation which may have been rejected or those items on which no action has been taken. In addition, responses must be detailed on all recommendations highlighted by the Commission in its notification letters to the school. School officials are expected to have completed or be in the final stages of completion of all valid visiting committee recommendations by the time the Five-Year Progress Report is submitted.

The Commission may request additional Special Progress Reports if one or more of the Standards are not being met in a satisfactory manner or if additional information is needed on matters relating to evaluation report recommendations or substantive changes in the school. To ensure that it has current information about the school, the Commission has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Commission within sixty days (60) of occurrence any substantive change which negatively impacts the school's adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The report of substantive change must describe the change itself and detail any impact which the change has had on the school's ability to meet CPSS Standards. The Commission's Substantive Change Policy is included in the Appendix on page 78. All other substantive changes should be included in the Two- and Five-Year Progress Reports and/or the Annual Report which is required of each member school to ensure that the Commission office has current statistical data on the school.

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

The visiting committee is appreciative of the warm hospitality shown by the Belchertown school community during the site visit. As well, the preparedness of the school for

the visit, the quality and comprehensiveness of the self-study, and the frankness and openness of the site interviews and meetings all contributed positively to the experience and to the accuracy and relevance of the final report.

ROSTER OF TEAM MEMBERS

Team Member	School	Town, State
John Clements (Chair)	Nipmuc Regional High School	Upton, MA
Laurie Farkas (Assistant Chair)	Hampshire Regional School District	Westhampton, MA
Gregory Allen	Boston Community Leadership Academy	Brighton, MA
Keith Berthiaume	Simsbury Public Schools	Simsbury, CT
David Chaplin	Milford High School	Milford, MA
David Emery	Enfield High School	Enfield, CT
Marie Erwin	Mt. Everett High School	Sheffield, MA
Kristy Garvey	Odyssey High School	Boston, MA
Mary Green	Grafton High School	Grafton, MA
John Kennedy	Duxbury High School	Duxbury, MA
Dr. Kristine Nash	Hanover Public Schools	Hanover, MA
Christine Page	West Bridgewater Middle/Senior High School	West Bridgewater, MA
Len Rabinowitz	Ashland High School	Ashland, MA
Jeremy Roche	Nashoba Regional High School	Bolton, MA
Marie Urmston	Hopedale High School	Hopedale, MA