

New England Association of Schools and Colleges



Commission on Public Secondary Schools

Report of the Visiting Committee for Manchester Essex Regional High School

**Manchester-By-The Sea,
Massachusetts
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STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS

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

The Commission on Public Secondary Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges located in Bedford, Massachusetts considers this visiting committee report of Manchester Essex Regional 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 Manchester Essex Regional 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 Manchester Essex Regional High School, this committee, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned all teachers and administrators in the school to appropriate subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities, and facilities available for young people.

The self-study of Manchester Essex Regional High School extended over a period of 20 school months from September 2007 to June 2009. The visiting committee was pleased to note that several times over this 20 month period, the standards committees invited several students and parents to join 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, Manchester Essex Regional 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 Manchester Essex Regional High School. The Committee members spent four days in Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts, 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, including teachers from a variety of content areas, student and school support staff members and central office administrators, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Manchester Essex Regional High School.

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 30 hours shadowing 15 students
- a total of 17 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 Manchester Essex Regional 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.

Quality of the Self-Study

The self-assessment completed by the professional staff of Manchester Essex Regional High School was thorough, clear, and well-structured. The findings of the staff provided insight for the committee and assisted in the preparation of the final report. The staff

addressed and rated and supported by documentation on each indicator. Consequently, this visiting committee was able to understand the strengths and needs of Manchester Essex Regional High School prior to the visit. The quality of student work submitted for review by Manchester Essex Regional High School was excellent and varied with many examples from each content area across the curriculum. The visiting team was pleased with the materials provided for review before the team's arrival at the school and with the efforts on the part of the administration, staff and steering committee chairs to make other information available during the four-day visit.

Teaching and Learning at Manchester Essex Regional High School

The self-study of Manchester Essex Regional High School identified the school's strengths and critical needs. The visiting committee endorsed many, but not all, of the strengths and needs contained in the self-study as well as adding several commendations and recommendations in each of the seven Standards for Accreditation. The commendations are well-deserved and validate the work of many members of the Manchester Essex Regional High School community. The recommendations will enable Manchester Essex Regional High School to continue to make progress in its pursuit of excellence and will require further commitment by both the school and community.

Manchester Essex Regional High School has developed and made public a sound mission and expectations. The work has begun to align the academic, social, and civic expectations with curriculum, instruction, and assessment and must continue its efforts to develop a means to effectively measure these expectations. A strong focus on integrating the mission and expectations into each of these Standards will allow the mission and expectations to better influence decisions made about student learning at Manchester Essex Regional High School.

It is clear that there is strong mutual respect between members of the staff and students at Manchester Essex Regional High School. The students at Manchester Essex Regional High School are highly involved within and beyond the classroom, and their accomplishments should be a great source of pride for the school community. The student initiative taken in the "greening" of the new school building is very impressive and symbolic of some of the best aspects of 21st century policy. The amazing variety of opportunities at Manchester Essex Regional High School that extend learning beyond the curriculum are most commendable. The professional staff works very hard to tend to the needs and interests of their students, and there is a strong culture that fosters individual growth that will help the school continue to make improvements in teaching and learning. There is a high graduation rate and students perform very well on standardized tests.

The faculty has maintained a strong informal network of professional collaboration around curriculum integration and instructional and assessment practices. There is extensive use of technology in instructional practices, and the new facility provides a variety of new technology available for teaching and learning. It is important that Manchester Essex Regional High School develop professional development and training to allow all staff members to take full advantage of the technological capacity available in their beautiful new facility.

The informal efforts and initiative of professional staff members to collaborate in the creation of connections within and between content areas have led to significant improvements in teaching and learning at Manchester Essex Regional High School. However, until curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices are aligned with the mission and expectations for student learning, the school will not be able to take full advantage of the high quality and extensive expertise of their staff. The school also must seek to expand opportunities for common planning time and to coordinate interdisciplinary learning activities. The recent hiring of a director of curriculum and the creation of a professional development committee should help the school in its efforts to create a professional development program that will help the school align its teaching and learning activities with the academic, civic, and social expectations for its students.

Support of Teaching and Learning at Manchester Essex Regional High School

It is remarkable that the administration and the professional and support staff at Manchester Essex Regional High School effectively kept the focus of the school on teaching and learning while simultaneously undertaking the monumental effort of relocating the school to a new building and preparing for the arrival of the visiting committee. Students report an unwavering commitment to maintaining academic rigor and all activities during construction, and members of the community report that the administrators kept them apprised of each stage of the construction and relocation. It is important at this juncture that the principal begin the process of creating a shared vision for the school community to provide direction and focus for the efforts of all members of the school community and for the purposeful dedication of resources for the future of Manchester Essex Regional High School.

The support staff at Manchester Essex Regional High School is very dedicated and has developed a broad array of educational programs to enhance student learning beyond the classroom, maintain healthy students physically and emotionally, and help all families prepare their children for post-secondary learning. The increase in student population has not been paired with increased staffing for student support services so that there is some concern that the quality of the services provided by support staff members may be compromised by the recent changes in the staff to student ratios in these areas.

The new high school building is an impressive educational facility that will only improve with the completion of the projects related to the development of the grounds as well as new capital, maintenance, and technology plans. Likewise, storage space is still in the process of coordination. The school community has developed and maintained many partnerships with educational institutions and local industry to provide a variety of opportunities for its students. With continued improvement efforts like those demonstrated by the administrators and staff members through the relocation process, Manchester Essex Regional High School is assured of a bright future.

MANCHESTER ESSEX HIGH SCHOOL SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Community

Manchester Essex Regional Middle High School, situated in the heart of Manchester-By-the-Sea, Massachusetts (a.k.a. Manchester), primarily serves the communities of Manchester and Essex. Located on Cape Ann in Essex County, Manchester is bordered by the city of Beverly to the southwest, the towns of Hamilton and Wenham to the northwest, the town of Essex to the north, the city of Gloucester to the northeast, and the Atlantic Ocean to the South. With easy access to both the major highway, Route 128, and the old shore road, Route 127, the town is a 35-45 minute drive to Boston, just 25 miles to the south.

Manchester, incorporated in 1645, encompasses approximately 9.3 square miles of land, while Essex, incorporated in 1819, covers approximately 14.2 square miles of land. Both retain their original identities as small, quiet seaside towns. Historically, Manchester, with its beautiful harbor and beaches, became the summer residence of many wealthy Boston families. It has been known for its fishing, lobstering, and yachting communities, as well as the melodious sands of Singing Beach. The defining geographical feature of Essex is the Essex River, which gave rise to the two industries for which it is best known: shipbuilding and clamming. The Town is the oldest continuously operating shipbuilding area in the country and is home to the original fried clam. Its many seafood restaurants, including the famous “Woodman’s,” as well as the Essex Shipbuilding Museum and a myriad of antiques shops make Essex a prime tourist destination on Cape Ann. The local economies have remained relatively stable over the years, with limited residential growth and limited commercial attrition. As all of the businesses in both towns are relatively small, owner-operated concerns, there are no major employers in the district.

The communities are very similar, both demographically and economically, with a combined population of 8,495 people – 5,228 in Manchester and 3,267 in Essex. English is the primary language of both communities, with only a negligible percentage (0.2) of other languages spoken in some homes. The small number of non-white students in the schools accurately reflects the racial and ethnic demographics of the community. According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, the median family income in Manchester was \$93,609; the median family income in Essex was somewhat lower at \$70,152; the disparity represents a correlation with the higher property values along the ocean in Manchester. The unemployment rate in the District is annually 3.5-4% and approximately 6% of the district’s students are identified as Low-income.

Consistent with the towns’ socio-economic make-up, the school District enjoys strong financial support from the community. The per-pupil expenditures annually exceed the State average; for example, during 2006-2007, the District spent \$12,436 per student vs. the State average of \$11,210. During the same school year, the percentage of local property tax dollars allocated to schools was 57.4% and the total percentage of school funds obtained from local sources was 81.3%. Only approximately 2% of the District’s

annual budget is obtained from federal funds. Each year, approximately 10% of the District enrollment is made up of students from neighboring towns through the school choice program.

The District consists of two elementary schools – one in each town – and the single-building Middle / High School. In addition, there are two private elementary schools located in Manchester – The Brookwood School and Landmark School. Within driving distance, there are six additional private, elementary schools, and nine private secondary schools that attract District residents. The total number of school-aged children – Pre-K through grade 12 - living in the District is 1507. Of that number, a total of 34 students (2.25%) attend public out-of-District schools: 11 students (.7%) at the two vocational schools, and 23 students (1.5%) at area public schools. Largely owing to the affluence of the community and to individual family traditions, the District sees a fairly substantial number of students– 20.4% - attend private day and boarding schools. When considering high school age only, the percentage is 29.7%.

The School and the Students

The Manchester Essex Regional School District includes the High School and Middle School in the same building, and two separate elementary schools, with a total 2006-07 student population of 1315. The Manchester Memorial School, located in Manchester, across the street from the Middle High School, has a population of 430 students in Kindergarten through the Sixth grade. The Essex Elementary School, located near the center of town in Essex, has 282 students in Pre-Kindergarten through the sixth grade. The Middle School brings together children from both towns in the seventh and eighth grades under one roof, a total of 209 students. The High School has 394 students in grades 9 – 12.

By all performance indicators, the Manchester Essex Regional High School can be considered high-achieving. Annually, fully 99% of seniors achieve their high school diploma. In the graduating class of the 2007, 90% of seniors went on to higher education – 81% to 4-year colleges or universities and 9% to two-year schools; two students (4%) entered the Military and three students (6%) entered the workforce. Although the District does not require or provide on-site test dates for college entrance exams, a large percentage - 86.9% vs. the State's 85% - of students in the class of 2007 took the SAT exams. The average score of 540 on the Critical Reading section compares very favorably to both the State average of 513 and the national average of 502; likewise, the District's students exceeded both the State and national performance averages on the Math section: the District average was 550; the State average was 522; and the national average was 515. Advanced Placement exams – 265 of them – were taken in 12 different subject areas, with 80% of scores at 3 or higher, earning recipients college credits. The small percentages of suspensions (approximately 5.5%), failing grades (7.5%) and dropouts (.5%), as well as the average daily attendance rates (students: consistently at or above 95% and teachers: 95-97%), are further evidence of the strong academic commitment in the high school.

The entire high school community values and recognizes the high achievement of our students, both academically and athletically. Every year, as a lead-in to the graduation ceremonies, an Academic Awards assembly is held during the school day, to which parents and community members are invited in addition to the entire student body. Students in all grades are recognized, by subject area, for their exceptional performance. Many awards, certificates and dedicated scholarships are bestowed, including special recognitions from a number of colleges, such as Harvard, Yale, Colby and the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, to name a few. The following day, the gathering is repeated with a focus on student athletes. On a less formal basis, the daily announcement process, the school newspaper, the Principal's newsletter and the local town newspapers all publicly recognize student achievement.

Since Regionalization of the two towns took place in 2000, class sizes have remained consistent at approximately 100 students per grade, and fairly balanced between males and females. With construction of the new school, scheduled to be completed in 2009, projections for class sizes have increased slightly, to approximately 110 students per grade. The schools reflect the demographics of the community, with 98.6% of students being White, .9% African-American, .2% Asian and .2% Hispanic. Given the stability of the District and the high performance levels of its students, as expected, there is no age/grade variance in the school population, very little transience and few withdrawals year to year.

The school year consists of 180 scheduled days for students, at the level required by the State Department of Education. Because of scheduled orientation and Professional Development Days, teachers attend for 184 days per year, for a total of 26 hours of provided professional development per year. Instructional time per day is 5.63 hours, for a total of 1,014 instructional hours per year, compared with the State requirement of 990 hours. The school day is structured into seven rotating blocks of 48 minutes each; i.e. the first four blocks of the day rotate on a five-day basis; the fifth block, which includes the lunch periods, remains constant, and the last two blocks of the day alternate. There is no scheduled common planning time during the school day for teachers. There are 10 required faculty meetings and 10 Department meetings held after the school day ends, and 45-50 Special Education meetings, that require some General Education teacher attendance, usually scheduled before the school day begins.

Students are required to earn 110 credits in order to graduate. The six core areas, for a total of 75 required credits, include: four years of English, three Mathematics courses, three Science courses, three Social Studies courses, one full-year equivalent in Computers and two semesters of Physical Education. In addition, the school offers electives in World Languages, Art, Music, Debate, Technical and Computer studies, and Business studies. Successful completion of each yearlong course yields five credits; each semester-long course grants 2.5 credits. Twenty-five credits must be earned each year in order to pass to the next grade. Students are also required to complete 40 hours of approved community service as a condition of graduation.

The average class size school-wide is 16.4 students, with classes ranging from only one to as many as 28 students. There are 49 teachers carrying an average load of 76 students

in the core curriculum classes. Thirty-six teachers, approximately 73% of the faculty, hold advanced degrees. Five teachers have a Preliminary license in an area of instruction, and only two teachers, or approximately 4% of the faculty, teach a class out of their area of certification. All core curriculum classes and some elective classes offer students a range of levels: Advanced Placement, Honors and College Prep. Of the 3,064 total course enrollment, 1,355 students – 44.2% - are at the Honors level or higher. All Special Education students – 11.2% of the student population – participate fully or nearly fully in the General Education curriculum, with both in-class and out-of-class supports. Approximately 10% of the Special Education students (1.2% of the total student population) are enrolled in one or two individual or small group classes, for credit. In those classes, Special Education Teachers deliver the DOE Frameworks and Standards through a modified curriculum and at a slower pace. Only one student receives bilingual instruction.

For students seeking enrichment coursework during the school year or during the summers, there are several institutions of higher learning in the area, including North Shore Community College, Salem State College, Gordon College, Endicott College and Montserrat College of Art. These schools also offer continuing education courses and degree options for adults in the community. District students may choose to enroll in or take ancillary courses at the North Shore Vocational and Technical High School and the Essex Agricultural School. The Manchester Essex Regional High School has a history of promoting business and community partnerships that are mutually beneficial. One such partnership is truly unique – in fact, we are the only high school in the state that offers this type of opportunity for students to combine curricular study and career advancement. Through the Science Department, interested students are partnered with professional research scientists in the thriving bio-technology field in and around Boston. The Authentic Science Research class is a demanding, two-year, Honors course that involves our students in real-world research projects at such prestigious institutions as Harvard, MIT, Boston University, and Mass General Hospital, to name a few. Summer internships have been arranged both locally and in other states and countries.

Additional school/career opportunities are offered on a per-quarter or per-semester basis. Through the Work/Study Program, administered by the Guidance Counselors, a small number of students earn high school credits by participating in one or two blocks per day of approved, supervised work outside of the classroom. Students fulfill this option by serving as Teaching Assistants in the Middle and Elementary schools, or by apprenticing in paid or unpaid employment at businesses in the community. The S.C.O.R.E. Project allows seniors to spend the final quarter of the year working in a field of interest to them, under supervision and with required hours and regular reports from a designated mentor. Through the school's DECA program, local, state and national businesses partner to introduce students to the professional demands of a career in Sales and Marketing. The DECA Program, the Debate Team, the Robotics Club and all the sports teams enjoy extensive support in time and money from parents and community residents. Other examples of partnerships with the community include foundations and businesses. The District benefits from the annual dedicated financial support of two local citizen groups. The Hooper Fund and The Spaulding Trust both raise and contribute money for

enrichment programs identified by the parents and faculty of the schools. In addition, Cell Signaling Technology, a life science company located in Danvers, MA, has made grants to enhance the science curriculum in the high school. On a less formalized basis, many of our students work after school, on weekends and over the summer at local businesses in both towns.

Over the last several years, the District has seen a number of changes in administration personnel, including an interim superintendent, a three-year interim high school Principal and the separation and creation of the office of Middle School Principal. As a consequence there have been few focused school reform initiatives. The current Principal, now in his second year, has revived the temporarily dormant issue of block scheduling. The very traditional seven-period schedule has been in effect largely owing to the fact that some teachers, including all electives teachers, have class assignments in both the Middle and the High School, which has made it very difficult to build longer blocks into the high school day. Many teachers, particularly in the Science and World Language Departments, have expressed the strong desire for extended periods in order to facilitate the type of instruction to which the District is committed. Several committees, composed of faculty, students and administrators have worked over the years to devise some variation in the schedule; however, to date, these efforts have met the very real stumbling blocks inherent in a small district with shared faculty. The results have been to institute a rotating block schedule and to continue to commit to an effort to include at least some longer periods.

The Manchester Essex Region has consistently and proudly been among the highest-performing districts in the state, as measured by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System. One hundred percent of our students who have met internal graduation requirements have received diplomas, with no student ever having fallen short due to MCAS performance. Nevertheless, annual analysis of the per student results of the MCAS exams is undertaken in order to identify any areas of relative weakness as well as to identify specific students who are in need of additional instruction. Small group, skills-based math instruction has been added to the course selection options for lower-performing students.

School Improvement Planning

Consistent with the District's mission that all students will be prepared for the many challenges they will face in their post-secondary lives, the process of school improvement planning is thoughtful, thorough and on-going. Formal plans are produced by the Principal and the Superintendent, following intensive self-study that includes recommendations from the faculty, the School Council, the School Committee and the Parent Advisory Committee. Three specific areas have been targeted to provide and enhance a relevant and healthy learning environment for faculty and students. With the upcoming inclusion of a Science component to the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, the Improvement Plan includes a commitment to provide additional supports in Science, as needed. Analysis of student performance on the standardized tests in the baseline years will provide the data upon which to plan needed

interventions, either individually or as part of the curriculum. Other school improvement targets aimed at student achievement include: implementing a senior advanced math and personal finance course; implementing government courses as senior electives; developing an inter-disciplinary course model between the English and Social Studies departments.

The District has also articulated goals relative to educator quality. With new administration has come a renewed emphasis on the provision of relevant professional development opportunities. A process of evaluating the role, function and value of the Professional Development Committee has begun with the intention of presenting a proposal for the future. In addition to supporting teachers' access to outside workshops, the District is committed to providing trainings on data collection and evaluation, as well as on the principles of effective teaching and effective leadership. An important area of focus is communications through the creation of a new school website that will more effectively and more efficiently connect all stakeholders in the school community. In the area of fiscal responsibility, District goals include developing a cost-saving efficiency analysis plan and designing a plan to standardize operations in school and district offices. In the long-term, plans are underway to review and refine the Capital Improvement Plan and to develop a formal Strategic Planning process. With the heightened anticipation of moving into a new, state-of-the-art building, the entire high school community stands poised to meet the mission of the District in serving our students, with renewed energy and with a positive outlook for their futures and the future of the District.

**MANCHESTER ESSEX REGIONAL SCHOOL
MISSION AND EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT LEARNING**

MISSION

The mission of Manchester Essex Regional High School is to provide a rigorous, well-rounded educational program in a learning environment that encourages individual growth and prepares all students for the diverse challenges of their futures.

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

The student is able to:

- read critically for a variety of purposes
- communicate clearly to an intended audience
- use a variety of mediums
- express original thoughts/ideas
- be receptive to communication
- write effectively
- identify and utilize technological and informational resources to gather and synthesize information
- demonstrate problem-solving and critical thinking skills

SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS

- experience personal growth through participation in elective offerings, extra-curricular opportunities, and school-sponsored activities
- demonstrate respect for themselves, others, and the community

CIVIC EXPECTATIONS

- participate in activities that foster citizenship and contribute to the community

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

**MISSION AND EXPECTATIONS FOR
STUDENT LEARNING**

CURRICULUM

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

1. MISSION AND EXPECTATIONS

The school's mission statement describes the essence of what the school as a community of learners is seeking to achieve. The expectations or 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 the 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 Manchester Essex Regional High School Mission Statement and Expectations for Student Learning was developed by a committee of professional staff members, parents, and administrators. The mission statement and expectations were approved unanimously by the faculty and accepted and approved by the Manchester Essex Regional School Committee. The mission statement and student expectations are becoming a part of the learning environment at Manchester Essex Regional High School. Though students are aware of the mission statement and student expectations found in each classroom, they did not play a role in its development. As a result, students do not know the details of the mission statement, nor do they understand its importance in the school-wide decision-making process. (teachers, students, school committee members self-study)

Manchester Essex Regional High School's mission statement represents the school community's fundamental values and beliefs about student learning. The mission statement clearly reflects the school community's values and beliefs in the school's diverse core curriculum, elective offerings, and extra and co-curricular offerings. Ninety-five percent of the faculty and staff members and one hundred percent of the school committee members agreed or strongly agreed that the mission statement embodies the core values of the school. Students at Manchester Essex Regional High School demonstrate a strong commitment to academic achievement. One of the most distinctive characteristics of the school is that students believe it is "cool to be scholarly." Students are actively involved in their education and seek to challenge themselves whenever possible. The school nurtures student individual growth in a variety of ways. After school, students are involved in a wide variety of clubs, activities, and athletics. Manchester Essex Regional High School strives to encourage students' personal growth by providing opportunities where students can interact with individuals outside of the immediate school community. This includes: International Week, DECA, SCORE, and opportunities for international student travel through the foreign language department. Consequently, the mission statement reflects the school community's fundamental values and beliefs about student learning. (self-study, teachers, students, Endicott Survey)

Manchester Essex Regional High School has defined school-wide academic, civic, and social expectations that reflect the school's mission. Academically, the school has expectations that students will read critically for a variety of purposes, communicate clearly to an intended audience, write effectively, utilize technological resources to gather and synthesize information, and demonstrate problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Civic and social expectations are also an integral component of the mission. Students are encouraged to nurture their own growth through participation in elective offerings, extra-curricular opportunities, and school-sponsored activities. The school expects students to demonstrate respect for themselves, others, and the community. Manchester Essex Regional High School has developed and approved a set of school-wide rubrics. Though intended for school-wide measurement of individual student performance, the academic rubrics are not incorporated into regular instructional practices throughout the school. Rather, academic departments are responsible for only one of the school-wide rubrics. The school community recognizes the lack of integration and clarity of the school-wide rubrics (academic, social, and civic) and understands that it must continue to clarify them and to raise awareness of the expectations. As a result, student academic expectations are

actually not clear, not only among students, but also among members of the staff.
(teachers, self-study, students)

After the faculty approved and adopted the mission and expectations, the mission statement committee adopted a set of rubrics for each learning expectation. These rubrics were reviewed, modified, and approved by the department chairs and the principal. Each department has been given responsibility for one of the learning expectations in order to assess students based on the appropriate rubric. Although the rubrics were incorporated as an aspect of the mid-year and final examinations, the rubrics and assessment process does not yet identify a targeted level of successful achievement for the academic expectations. The school-wide expectations for learning remain the responsibility of departments who are not specifically addressing at a targeted level of successful achievement in assessment, thus students are not yet held responsible for achieving these expectations. (teachers, self-study, student work, panel presentation)

Manchester Essex Regional High School students participate in activities that promote citizenship and that contribute to the community. All students are required to complete forty hours of community service prior to graduation, and many students exceed this requirement. Students participate in such community activities as Interact Club, the SCORE program, peer leadership, tutoring, Diversity Alliance, and the student assistant option. Given the global conditions in which we live, the level of environmental awareness evident among the staff and the student body is commendable. Every inch of the building encourages and celebrates responsible care of the planet, and the school community is acutely aware of this responsibility. Manchester Essex Regional High School's diligence in this arena, from recycling to conservation of water and energy resources is a model for others to follow. Although there is clearly a level of social and civic involvement by students at Manchester Essex Regional High School, the school does not have a set of formal indicators nor a means to measure the school's or students' achievement of its civic and social expectations. (parents, self-study, teachers, facility tour)

The procedures, policies, and decisions of Manchester Essex Regional High School reflect a consciousness of the mission statement and the school's expectations for student learning. Recently, there has been a number of such collaborative decisions a modification of the school's community service requirement, new courses in industrial design and robotics, and implementation of a rotating class schedule that increases time on learning for students in the classroom. Most notable is the new state-of-the-art school facility opened at the beginning of the academic year 2009-2010 that supports all levels of student learning and instruction. The mission statement is displayed prominently throughout the school. It is published on the school website, posted on hallway walls, in the cafeteria, and in all classrooms. It is printed in the course of studies manual and the student handbook. The spirit of the mission statement is reflected in the culture of the school by the dedication of the faculty, staff, and administration to student learning, and it can clearly be observed in the atmosphere of intellectual curiosity and academic achievement that permeates the school. However, this use of the mission statement and student expectations for learning to guide procedures, policies, and decisions of the school must be spoken of and publicized by school decision-makers while discussing and

advocating policies and decisions to make the school mission centered and to recognize singleness of purpose and goal-orientation. (teachers, self-study, student work, student shadowing)

The first meeting of the mission statement committee was October 18, 2005. In January of 2007, the final approved version of the mission statement and expectations document was posted on the school's website and in each classroom. Students were not involved in the development of expectations, nor have they been surveyed regarding their knowledge of them. In March of 2007, it was printed in the course of studies manual, and in September 2007, it appeared in the student handbook which parents and students review and sign. The Manchester Essex Regional High School Mission Statement and Expectations for Student Learning extend the district's mission statement's call to "educate all students", "inspire passion", and "instill a love of learning" through its emphasis on individual growth. Students are encouraged to pursue their interests and reach their full potential by means of a plethora of course offerings and extra-curricular activities. The school's mission statement and expectations for student learning also extend the district's encouragement of "local and global citizenship" by including essential social and civic goals that foster active student involvement in the world outside their classrooms. There is currently no formal process in place for the review of the mission statement and expectations for student learning. The school needs to institute a process for regular review of the mission statement and expectations for student learning using a variety of data to insure that the document reflects student needs, community expectations, the district mission, and state and national standards. Planned formal review and revision with a timeline by a committee that represents all the stakeholders in the school community using data derived from student assessment of achievement of the expectations will be necessary to assure the continued relevance and strength of the mission. (teachers, self-study, meetings with teachers, classroom observations)

COMMENDATIONS

1. The community-wide belief in and acceptance of the school mission statement
2. The commitment of the staff and students to the spirit of the mission statement demonstrated by the care and respect of students and staff for each other
3. Clear and direct mission statement with specific expectations for student learning
4. The enthusiastic and passionate faculty whose members personify the ideals of the mission statement
5. An active and enthusiastically involved student body
6. The support the new high school facility provides for the school to accomplish its mission and to help students achieve the academic, civic and social expectations

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Institute a formal process based on data for the regular review of the mission statement and student expectations for learning that includes parents, teachers, and students
2. For each academic expectation, select a targeted level of successful achievement identified in a rubric to assess all students' achievement of school-wide expectations
3. Implement the use of school-wide rubrics and document the results to inform students of achievement and to use to inform curricular and instructional improvements
4. Create indicators to measure school-wide civic and social expectations
5. Implement an assessment process to measure civic and social expectations
6. Inform students of their achievements and inform the community of the school's achievement of civic and social expectations

STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

2. 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

Manchester Essex Regional High School has rewritten its mission statement and its expectations for learning to include five academic expectations. Each curriculum area has identified the school-wide academic expectation for which it is responsible. The self-study guide and panel presentations revealed that there is no formal department assignment to assess each student's integration of technology to gather and synthesize

information. However, classes such as US History II, address this standard through research projects. Departments have adopted academic expectations and have articulated the standards for achieving these expectations through assignments such as foreign language communication (speeches) and research paper writing in social studies. Each curriculum area has identified a common core of knowledge related to the academic expectations but has not yet written the expectation into the curriculum. Consequently, the curriculum documents are not aligned with school-wide academic expectations and do not contain a mechanism that measures student achievement of expectations as outlined in the mission statement, although the rubrics are to be incorporated as an aspect of mid-term and final examinations. (curriculum guides, self-study, teachers, classroom observations, student work)

Some curriculum guides are aligned with the academic expectations in that they contain elements of writing effectively, problem-solving, utilizing technology, and engaging in critical thinking. The social studies department incorporates student and teacher initiated Power Point presentations into its units. English students practice critical thinking in reading as well as writing effectively. The math and science curricula encourage problem-solving and critical thinking. Some curriculum guides informally address more than one expectation. All the curriculum guides describe specific learner outcomes or essential questions. There are support systems in place to help all students achieve academic success, but although honors courses challenge, courses at some levels are not engaging and challenging. Teachers are available for extra help and students serve as peer tutors. The student assistance team and learning center are available for students with learning disabilities who require a 504 plan. As a result, students have many opportunities to achieve academic success. However, because all the curriculum guides are not specifically, formally aligned with the academic expectations, the school cannot ensure that all students are given equal opportunities to achieve all academic expectations in all courses. (self-study, teachers, student work, administrators, classroom observations)

The curriculum guides inform Manchester Essex Regional High School Program of Studies. Curriculum guides do not integrate relevant school-wide learning expectations. Curriculum documents consistently prescribe content and identify specific learning goals. The written curriculum also suggests varied instructional strategies but fails to suggest varied assessment techniques that include the use of school-wide rubrics. As a result, Manchester Essex Regional High School lacks any mechanism to measure the implementation of school-wide learning expectations or to ensure that students have multiple opportunities to achieve school-wide learning expectations. Written curriculum is not consistently aligned to state or national standards in every content area. Consequently, the school must select and adopt a uniform format for curriculum writing that is complete and establish a schedule of curriculum revision that is consistent. It may be necessary to provide professional development for faculty members as well. (curriculum guides, self-study, program of studies, student work, teachers)

The curriculum engages many students in higher level thinking strategies, problem-solving, and authentic application of knowledge and skills. Students can enroll in

Authentic Science Research (ASR) which is a two-year honors course that provides students an opportunity to partner with a professional research scientist in a biotechnology field on real-world research projects. This course serves a relatively small number of students although that number of participants has greatly increased from 6 to 20 in two years. The Debate class and Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) offer opportunities for students to compete with other schools across the state and the nation. Art and photography students create and display their work throughout the building. In the honors and advanced placement courses, students are encouraged to think critically and apply their knowledge to other applications. English courses require that students write research papers that utilize literary criticisms. The algebra courses utilize CBLs to analyze and interpret mathematical models. The curriculum does not specifically articulate the differences between honors level student expectations and college prep student expectations, however, but a review of curriculum guides and classroom observations reveal that, although there is ample opportunity for students in honors level courses to apply higher order thinking, there is not a consistent expectation that the college prep students will develop these same skills. As a result, there are insufficient specific opportunities articulated in the written curricula to encourage college prep students to learn and practice higher level thinking strategies and authentic application of skills. (curriculum guides, student work, classroom observations, program of studies, program brochures, school newspaper)

Manchester Essex Regional High School is taking steps to more effectively integrate its curriculum. Although interdisciplinary units are not formally written into the curriculum, combined content-area workrooms, active teacher advocacy for common planning time, and existing interdisciplinary programs all demonstrate not only a recognition that curriculum integration is a goal of the high school but also a priority for teachers already working in informal ways to achieve appropriate integration. There is informal curriculum integration between English and world history in the *Revolutionary Thinking* unit, and there is an interdisciplinary unit between French and art addressing 19th century French photography. There is in-depth coverage of content in lessons on child labor addressing uses of space in workplaces and living areas in early industrial America. This depth of coverage can be found in much of the informal or taught curriculum where several different skills are addressed within each unit. Because of this, students have opportunities to make meaningful connections between content areas and to practice skills within several content frameworks. (teachers, classroom observations, self-study, administrators)

Manchester Essex Regional High School provides many opportunities for students to extend their learning in meaningful ways outside of the classroom. Through the DECA program, students practice meaningful skills related to marketing and management. The Debate team provides students with extended practice in oral debate and communication. The MERHS Senior Choice of Related Experience Project (SCORE) allows seniors to engage in real-world learning experiences and to begin to develop the skills they will need to be competitive job-seekers. The Robotics Club also allows students to practice their interests in science after school. There is also an active student newspaper. There are no academic prerequisites for these activities which engage a wide array of students with

the world around them. These programs also allow students to apply what they learn in the classroom to practical situations. Because of these programs, students at Manchester Essex Regional High School experience a high level of experiential learning that is supported by the school in numerous ways. (parents, student shadowing, teachers, school newspaper, classroom observations)

The curriculum is effectively integrated between different grades within content areas. The curriculum within each content area delineates learned skills between grades and between related classes. For example, curriculum in English for grade twelve builds on skills learned through curriculum in grades nine through eleven. Curriculum articulation between the middle school and the high school is managed through teacher meetings that take place once a month for teachers of the same content in grades six through twelve. Student placement in class levels becomes difficult when students come from out of district schools (as in the school choice program) or when students arrive at Manchester Essex Regional High School from a private school setting. There is an ongoing need to articulate curriculum in more formal ways between academic areas, however. Thus, while the faculty and administration have made efforts to ensure that formal articulation and coordination of curriculum is taking place within academic disciplines and informally between academic disciplines, more efforts are needed to formalize the process between academic areas. This coordination will ensure many opportunities for all students to meet curricular goals. (curriculum standard meetings, administrators, classroom observations, curriculum guides)

The move to the new building allows effective implementation of curriculum with material, technological, and equipment-supply enhancements. Teachers report that technological implementation in the curriculum has skyrocketed through the beginning of the year to the point where there are not enough computers to satisfy all classroom needs concurrently. The library-media center is fully equipped with technology and allows for several classes to work in small and large group settings on a variety of research-related projects using technology. Supplies and facilities have been upgraded so that, for example, science teachers now have the appropriate means to perform experiments as outlined in the *Physics-First* curriculum. However, teachers report that technology (i.e. server capacity and thus corresponding computer performance) often slows down in the middle of the day. Thus, the development of a plan for allowing equal access to information technology for all classes will ensure that technology continues to remain an integral part of the curriculum. (teachers, classroom observations, administrators, technology/lab schedules)

The professional staff is not fully involved in the ongoing development and revision of curriculum. The school district has employed a full-time curriculum coordinator who is making efforts to evaluate the vertical alignment of curriculum in K-12. This necessitates staff members at the high school to reevaluate their curriculum and revise it accordingly. However, there is no formal evaluation process for measuring curricular connections with the school's academic expectations. Teachers must do this on their own and informally. For example, only 61% of teachers surveyed feel that decisions for curriculum revision are based on student performance and assessment data. As a result, it is difficult to

determine whether the curriculum has been assessed and revised. The teaching staff and curriculum director have suggested that a formal process that outlines how curriculum will be reviewed, a timeline for revision and implementation, and what data will be used needs to be developed and implemented. (self-study, Endicott Survey, administrators, curriculum standard committee, teachers)

The school provides sufficient financial resources and personnel for developing curriculum. Department heads and the principal are responsible for reviewing and evaluating curriculum. The school district has hired a full-time curriculum coordinator who oversees curriculum development and articulation. Teachers are encouraged to attend workshops and other professional development opportunities to improve their curriculum writing skills. Teachers also receive financial reimbursement for courses taken towards professional development, and the school district also provides additional leave time, and substitutes. Also, teachers who are new to Manchester Essex Regional High School undergo a three-year mentorship program. It is not clear however, that resources have been devoted to any specific evaluation or revision of the written curriculum. Teachers report that much curriculum evaluation and revision has been completed on school time and as part of in-house professional development opportunities. Therefore, while the school district expends adequate funding and other resources on curriculum application, it has not dedicated the time to developing a formal curriculum revision or professional development plan. (professional development calendar, administrators, teachers, professional development bulletin)

Professional development activities support the development and implementation of new curriculum. Teachers report that they are paid and given leave time for developing such new curriculum as the *Physics First* program and for implementation of the *Revolutionary Thinking* interdisciplinary program. Teachers collaborate in unstructured ways and also receive support and opportunities to attend classes at Salem State College and national standards conferences such as the annual meeting of the National Council for Teachers of Math. The school must now focus on the evaluation and revision of the curriculum. With such this focus, curriculum will be aligned between content areas and will be clear about its connection with school-wide learning expectations. (professional development calendar, curriculum guides, teachers, administrators)

COMMENDATIONS

1. Manchester Essex Regional High School's extensive array of opportunities to extend learning beyond the classroom
2. Manchester Essex Regional High School students who are extremely active in their school and global communities fulfilling and exceeding their social and civic goals, particularly for the comprehensive Green Project

3. The use of technology that is fully integrated into the informal curriculum through observable instruction in all content areas
4. The variety of offerings and the high level of student participation in activities that promote community service and citizenship
5. The administrative initiative to hire a director of curriculum that has laid the ground-work for future curriculum articulation and revision oversight
6. Effective curricular integration through regular teacher meetings grades 6-12.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Formalize a program of curriculum revision with a timeline
2. Select a common format for curriculum development 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.
3. Ensure that all curricula at all levels are equally challenging engaging students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking, and providing opportunities for authentic application of skills
4. Align the written curriculum with state and national standards consistently
5. Develop and coordinate a formal professional development calendar that ensures all teachers training in all aspects of curriculum development

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

3. 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 and practices shall be consistent with the school's stated mission 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

Although teachers use instructional strategies that align with the Manchester Essex Regional High School Mission and Expectations for Student Learning, few students make clear connections between the mission and instruction. Seventy three percent of the faculty believes that students live out the mission and expectations for student learning, yet only 38.5 percent of the students is familiar with the mission statement. Sixty percent of the faculty considers the mission statement when making important professional decisions. Students are exposed to a variety of critical reading opportunities through the

summer reading program sponsored by staff members. Communication intended for specific audiences is demonstrated by the annual art show, music performances, and debate and speech competitions. Art classes create sculptures, prints, and photography that express original thoughts and ideas. Students research primary documents to develop research papers throughout the disciplines. English courses expose students to creative writing, persuasive essays, and short stories as well as formal academic processes of writing that involve gathering and synthesizing information. The Authentic Science Research class allows students to research, data analysis and the need to use problem solving and critical thinking skills. Students also demonstrate these skills in the robotics program, Computer Aided Drafting/Engineering Program, and the Math Summer Assignment Program. Students have a broad range of after school programs (sports, clubs, and teams) that allow personal growth and help establish a sense of community. Nearly 70 percent of the student body participates in athletics, and 89 percent participates in at least one extracurricular activity. In addition, students clearly demonstrate respect for their community through the development of the Green Program. Students can leave lockers open, demonstrating profound respect for each other's privacy and belongings. There are numerous internships that foster citizenship through programs such as SCORE, student council, and mock elections. Because students and teachers do not have a clear understanding of the mission, however the connections made between instructional strategies and the mission are coincidental and the results of best practices rather than purposeful. (self-study, teachers, classroom observations, student shadowing, students, student work, Endicott Survey)

Teachers at Manchester Essex Regional High School informally make connections across disciplines, personalize instruction to some students, and promote some self-assessment and self-reflection. Most advanced placement and honors courses engage students as higher-level thinkers and as active and self-directed learners, but equal demands have not been made on the college preparatory students to develop these same skills. Teachers use strategies that personalize instruction to address the learning needs of students by making themselves available to all students through e-mails, class journals, and written communications with the parents. The special education team, student assistance team, and learning center provide suggestions for accommodations to students on individual education plans (IEPs) or 504 plans. Sixty-seven percent of students believe that teachers use a variety of instructional methods. In the honors classes, students are actively involved learners, they are given higher-order thinking questions and collaborate to solve problems. Sixty percent of teachers say that their material extends into other subject areas. Support services has made efforts to integrate Choice Theory into English classes. Teachers are generally responsible for connecting disciplines, but there is no formal means to accomplish this task. Faculty members believe that 89.4 percent of their lessons contain information and skills that can be applied outside the classroom. There is formal interdisciplinary instruction between some topics in French and photography, history and English, and math and science classes. Only a reported 56.5 percent of students has an opportunity to apply what they are learning outside the classroom. Less than half of faculty members gave an opportunity to students to assess their own work while close to one third did so rarely. Students actively participate in hands-on projects in physics, discuss debate prompts in history classes, and orally present research projects as well as

other assignments. Ninety percent of teachers say that they involve students in higher-order thinking skills to promote depth of understanding. Teachers involve engaged students in higher-order thinking skills in advanced placement and honors level classes, but many college preparatory classes could not provide examples of instructional strategies that encourage higher-order thinking and independent learners. Students in college preparatory courses have fewer opportunities to integrate higher-order thinking skills into learning. (teacher interviews, instruction standard committee, meetings with teachers, classroom observations, self-study, students, Endicott Survey, student work)

Teachers use a variety of sources such as other teachers, students, and supervisors as a means of improving instruction but do not gain input from parents in the community. Sixty-one point seven percent of the staff receives input from supervisors, which teachers believe plays an important role in improving their instruction. Only 2 percent of parents reports that teachers asked for their input in regard to their child's instruction. Students suggested that 57.9 percent of teachers asked for their input regarding instruction. Manchester Essex Regional High School uses formal feedback from supervisors as well as from student evaluations and informal feedback from professional collegial relationships. Because of the disconnect from parents, feedback in the process, teachers do not have a formal process to receive parental feedback they can use to improve instruction. (Endicott Survey, self-study, teacher interviews, meetings with teachers)

Manchester Essex Regional High School teachers are experts in their content area and reflect informally on their own practices, but there is no formal means to identify specific professional development opportunities that support teacher goals. Data shows that all teachers have degrees in higher education (21.8 percent bachelors, 21.8 percent masters, 43.6 percent masters plus, and 12.7 percent doctorates). Ninety three point two percent of the faculty teaches core academic classes in which they are highly qualified. Informal reflection on individual teacher's work takes place regularly. Eighty percent of teachers at Manchester Essex Regional High School also creates goals each year and assesses them with supervisors, yet 45 percent conducts course evaluations to receive student input as a tool to reflect on their instructional strategies. Few teachers actively seek out conferences and out-of-school training to enhance content area knowledge. The absence of correlation between teacher instructional goals and professional development opportunities leads to inconsistent growth in knowledge of the content area and reflection on personal practices. (Endicott Survey, Massachusetts Department of Education Profile Teacher Data, classroom observations, teacher interviews, self-study)

Teachers at Manchester Essex Regional High School are not provided with sufficient formal time to discuss instructional strategies. A reported 87.2 percent of the faculty discusses instructional strategies with their colleagues. However, these discussions are informal and limited. Department meetings are held once a month to discuss these topics, but the meetings exclude many representatives of electives. There is no common planning time for teachers to meet during the day to discuss instructional strategies. Teachers desire more opportunities to connect formally with colleagues and share ideas about instruction. The school provides content-specific workrooms where teachers can take their own initiative and work together, yet their schedules often do not allow

consistent collaboration. As a result of only informal discussions taking place about instructional strategies, the faculty is unable to make substantial, organized instructional improvement. (meetings with teachers, teacher interviews, Endicott Survey, self-study, school leadership meeting)

Manchester Essex Regional High School provides numerous technological devices for teachers to use in the classroom. However, given the enormous quantity of new technology, training is needed for all teachers to ensure proper use. Over eighty-two percent of students believe that teachers use technology in their classes. Over eighty-three percent of teachers integrate technology into instructional practices. Numerous examples of technology are evident throughout the school such as graphing calculators in mathematics and science, SMARTBoards in mathematics, websites developed and updated in Spanish, and LCD projectors in all classes. Students are called upon to use technology by creating computer animation in art, to use Geometer's Sketchpad in geometry, to study cultural aspects and develop PowerPoint presentations in Spanish, and to use word-processing for most major writing assignments. The struggles to new technology has distracted from student learning. The technology available in all classrooms provides students with diverse learning opportunities that suit individual learning styles, but there is a need for more teacher adequate training in technology so that technology can be utilized to its fullest capacity. (Endicott Survey, meetings with teachers, teacher interviews, parents, school board, classroom observations)

Manchester Essex Regional High School provides insufficient professional development programs guided by identified instructional needs or opportunities for teachers to develop and improve their instructional strategies. The creation of a curriculum coordinator position and the establishment of a professional development committee are initiatives that will improve the effectiveness of time spent. Survey results indicate that only 52.9 percent of the staff believes the professional development in the area of instructional strategies is based on identified instructional needs. Three to four professional development days each year are dedicated to improving instructional strategies through monthly faculty and department meetings and informal discussions about instructional strategies at the department chair meeting. The induction program for new teachers to Manchester Essex Regional High School focuses on "Research for Better Teaching", "Effective Parent Conferences", and a mentoring program. A variety of professional development opportunities located outside the district is communicated to all teachers. However, it is necessary to identify student instructional needs using collected data to determine objectives for professional development for teachers. (self-study, meetings with teachers, teacher interviews, curriculum director, Endicott Survey)

Teacher supervision and evaluation processes at Manchester Essex Regional High School are inconsistent and do not provide effective instructional improvement to enhance student learning. When administered effectively, teachers gain greatly from the structured evaluation process that includes a classroom observation, pre and post conferences, and both formative and summative reports that combine to reinforce the district goals. There is a common evaluation tool based on the Principles of Effective Teaching in which collaborative agreements have been made to integrate data-related

goals for each teacher into the evaluation processes. However, there is little common language and formal training for all evaluators. Although improvements have been made in the evaluation process, the lack of consistency and formal use does not lead to improvement of student learning. (meetings with teachers, teacher interviews, self-study)

COMMENDATIONS

1. Culture of learning is well-rounded and encourages individual growth of students and teachers
2. Teachers, initiative to identify professional development needs in technology and increasing interdisciplinary connections
3. Range of after school programs that allow personal growth and help establish a sense of community
4. Students' demonstration of respect for their community and each other
5. Availability of technology that contributes to interactive learning environments
6. Teachers use of input from teachers, students, and supervisors to improve instruction
7. Mentoring program that supports new teachers' induction into the school and community
8. Exemplary teacher work thus far on creating interdisciplinary curricula without common planning time

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure that all students at all levels of instruction are given opportunities to use higher-order thinking process
- ~~2.~~ Train evaluators to use the evaluation process to more effectively improve instruction
3. Create formal opportunities for teachers to plan and improve interdisciplinary instruction
4. Provide more formal opportunities for parents to provide feedback for teacher instruction
5. Identify student instructional needs in order to provide effective professional development programs
6. Provide training in technology for all teachers

7. Develop a formal means for teachers to collaborate about instructional strategies including professional development in effective protocols
8. Identify ways to provide common planning time

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

Manchester Essex Regional High School publicly displays the mission statement and related academic student expectations. Mission and expectation statements are posted throughout the school. Specific learning criteria based on expectations for student learning are the basis for grading and reporting. Most teachers and department leaders use formal rubrics in their specific subject areas, but the formats used are inconsistent and the rubrics used are not the school-wide rubrics. Academic, social, and civic expectations are not assessed within content areas for student and school-wide progress. Teachers and department leaders say that the school intends to use these evaluations, but they are currently only beginning to implement them. The school-wide expectations must be explained and school-wide rubrics must be used consistently across all disciplines, so that students may be held to consistent expectations. (assessment committee, teachers, self-study, student work)

Manchester Essex Regional High School encourages its students to participate in varied civic and social projects. The students and teachers exhibit a sense of pride and accomplishment in student civic and social involvement. Activities include the “greening” of the school, food drives, AIDS awareness, and diversity issues, among others. The mission of implementing the Green Program which commits the students and staff members to a strict recycling process is testimony to their dedication. There is palpable excitement among the students and staff members as data are accumulated highlighting the success of their recycling efforts. The guidance department documents quantitative data of student involvement in community service activities. An improved system of presenting data in a logical format is currently being developed. Students write a reflection on their community service experiences, but there is no system to measure the qualitative social and civic benefits to the students and to the community. Such a tool that measures student personal growth and respect for others in the community will be necessary to assess the success of the various programs in achieving the civic and social expectations. (teachers, self-study, students, panel presentation)

Students are aware of course-specific learning goals in most of their courses. Many teachers provide course syllabi that include the academic expectations and course-specific learning goals that will be assessed. The format used by teachers to convey student expectations is varied throughout the school, however, and this inconsistency results in difficulty in determining whether or not the goal of achieving school-wide and course-specific expectations have been met for all students. Teachers plan to post department websites that will provide course syllabi that include academic expectations and course learning goals. It will be important to create a consistent format for reporting these expectations and goals within departments and across the school. Without consistent, clearly defined expectations for courses and learning activities that integrate with the mission and expectations, the school cannot demonstrate a commitment to meeting school-wide academic goals that offer pathways to success for all students.(self study, students, teachers, student work)

Some Manchester Essex Regional High School teachers understand the value of using school-wide and course-specific rubrics demonstrated by their use of rubrics when

assessing student work. The school has developed school-wide rubrics in writing, reading, communicating, and problem-solving and has assigned various departments to assess specific expectations' indicators in their courses. For example, the history department has been assigned to integrate the writing indicator into its course expectations. (It will include a school-wide technology rubric in the future.) However, departments are not yet using these rubrics in their classroom assessments. Development of school-wide rubrics is a good start, but much more needs to be done to create and implement clear, well integrated system that relates course assessments to school-wide expectations within departments and throughout the school. Only through familiarity with such a system by both student and teacher, will the goals of the mission statement be fully met for all students. (teachers, student work, course syllabi, self-study)

The teachers at Manchester Essex Regional High School use a variety of assessment strategies to determine student knowledge, skills, and competencies. Examples of assessment tools include pen and paper testing, quizzes, worksheets, homework, PowerPoint presentations, projects, lab reports, and presentations. Many students are provided opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in authentic experiences that include writing for the school newspaper, participation in local and national competitions in robotics, music, and science, and through the School Choice of Related Experience Program (SCORE). Another commendable example of project work is demonstrated through the Green Project where a significant number of students took the lead in creating a fully green school. This is a clear example of how students demonstrate their knowledge and competencies as they apply them to a real life situation. Now, the school must develop a method to provide feedback to students related to their success with the project. Teachers use a disparate array of tools to provide assessment criteria to students ranging from simple checklists to very detailed rubrics. Although the consensus among staff members is that many teachers provide rubrics for grading student work, many of these documents do not specify the level of performance expected and how it will be rated for quality. In addition, school wide rubrics are not used consistently within the content areas that have adopted them. These rubrics were piloted last year for midterms and final exams, but faculty members have acknowledged that they are only in the beginning stages of using school-wide rubrics and have plans to expand their use to other content areas in the future. Because there is a wide variety of strategies used to assess student success, students are able to use their strengths, creativity, learning styles, and interests to demonstrate their knowledge and skill, but it may not be clear to students what their weaknesses are in a given assignment and what they need to do to improve. When both teachers and students have become familiar with the use of rubrics as formative assessments, the students may have a clearer understanding of the level of performance they need to reach in an assignment and what an excellent product would look like. Thus, it may be necessary for teachers to receive professional development in the use of rubrics throughout the year as supports for student understanding, and frequent use of rubrics with a designated level of successful achievement will increase student self-assessment skills and their understanding of mission and expectations as well. (student work, student shadowing, self-study, teachers, classroom observations)

Teacher collaboration takes place both formally and informally among staff members within departments. There is formal collaboration during monthly one-hour department meeting times and in some of the professional development activities. Some of this collaboration involves reviewing student assessments, identifying weaknesses, and revising curriculum and instructional practices to improve student learning. Work rooms are designed to provide meeting places within the school for teachers to meet, share, and plan, but the only time consistently provided for the entire department to meet is during the monthly meetings. Informal collaboration takes place more often when teachers are free at the same time and initiate conversations about their individual and mutual work. There is no school plan to provide systematic time for teachers to collaborate on a continuing basis specifically to review assessments to inform instruction given time for regular collaboration, departments would have opportunities to identify areas of weakness, to develop and review formative assessments, and for members to support each other as they work to improve instruction and student achievement. (self-study, teachers, department leaders, curriculum director)

Professional development opportunities to provide staff members with a wide range of assessment strategies are in its early stages of implementation at Manchester Essex Regional High School. A director of curriculum was hired a year ago, and he has begun to direct professional development for the district. In 2008-2009 training was provided in the use of formative and summative assessments and in the development of SMART goals. Teachers are invited to attend professional development workshops at the Boston Educational Collaborative, Primary Source, and the Salem State Collaborative. Some-school based professional time was provided to individual departments to work on adopting school-wide rubrics and piloting their use during the past year, but now the school needs a systematic plan to train all teachers to develop and use rubrics effectively and to work collaboratively to develop common formative and summative assessments. The school needs a consistent goal to provide professional development time for teachers to collaborate and develop student assessment strategies together, to be trained in the use of varied assessment strategies to evaluate unique student capabilities, and to interpret assessment data and use it consistently to inform instruction and improve curriculum. (teachers, self-study, department leaders, curriculum coordinator)

The Manchester Essex Regional High School faculty members use a variety of methods to communicate academic expectations in the content areas to students and families. Some courses have clear course syllabi that include some or all of the following: course goals, outlines, essential questions and habits of mind, objectives, and methods of assessment. These are shared with families at the fall open house. Some teachers use web pages to share similar information with families. Report cards are sent home every eight weeks with comments that indicate academic performance and classroom behavior. In addition, mid-term progress reports are sent home for students who are earning grades below a C-. Students with identified special needs receive more frequent and detailed reports that cover academic as well as civic and social progress. Parents do not completely understand specific academic expectations and methods of assessment within the content areas but feel confident that if they want this information, they can readily

obtain it. The mission statement is clearly posted in each classroom, and many teachers regularly reference the school-wide goals. Information is also shared about school progress related to external “high stakes” testing. Because the school has no method in place to assess student progress on achieving school-wide expectations so it is not communicated. Therefore students and parents are not aware of or informed about progress related to school-wide expectations. (self-study, teachers, parents, classroom observations, principal, school newspaper)

COMMENDATIONS

1. The use of varied assessment strategies across a wide range of curriculum areas
2. High level of student participation in authentic assessment activities beyond the classroom
3. The success of the Green Program

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Use school-wide rubrics for assessing the student achievement of academic expectations in all departments
2. Create indicators for each expectation and a system to assess, record, and report student achievement of school-wide expectations
3. Develop an assessment tool to measure how the school is meeting social and civic expectations and inform the community of the result
4. Provide professional development for all faculty members in the development and use of rubrics
5. Provide regular opportunities for teachers to collaborate within and across disciplines to share student work and the results of assessments
6. Use assessment data from student accomplishment of school-wide expectations to inform curricular and instructional improvement

SUPPORT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

SUPPORT STANDARDS

5. LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

The way in which a school organizes learning for all 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 wellbeing 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 Manchester Essex Regional High School has autonomy and decision-making authority within his building. The members of the school board and the superintendent have provided the principal with autonomy to make critical decisions in preparation for the move from the old school to the new as well as other major decisions. In most critical and routine decisions, the principal is in control of his management and leadership procedures. For example, after a collaborative internal interviewing process to hire new staff members, the principal forwards final candidates to the superintendent for approval. Likewise, the principal independently gathers input for the budget early in the school year and then confers with other members of the administrative council – the other three principals and the central administration – to collaboratively reach a budget proposal put forward to the school committee. The superintendent has provided full support of the principal's several initiatives and proposals, including a substantial change to the school schedule, a new robotics course, and major decisions tied to the move to a new facility. In difficult choices such as student expulsion, the superintendent has supported the principal's decision. Therefore, the principal is able to provide students and faculty with leadership that advances the school's mission and expectations for learning. (principal, central administrators, teachers, self-study)

With a clear sense of direction, the principal has led the staff and students effectively in moving to a new building and preparing for this 2009 NEASC visit while keeping teaching and learning at the forefront of priorities. Despite construction activity and building challenges in the old school, students and parents report an unwavering commitment by faculty and staff members to maintaining academic rigor and full activities. During the construction of the new building and the move, the principal kept the school community informed and engaged in the process through a regular newsletter, open meetings, and ConnectEd (a telephone and e-mail "push" communication system). The principal continues to use these same systems to disseminate his plans. The parents would like the newsletter to be published more often, however, as the last time the newsletter was published was in May 2009. The principal also noted that the website has not been consistently updated as a result of diminished staff and a lack of training among current staff members. In November of this year, staff members will be trained to maintain the website. The school enjoys a strong sense of collegiality, and the faculty

works well with the administration. Now, with the move and this accreditation completed, the principal needs to move forward to develop a clear process for building a shared vision for Manchester Essex Regional High School. While the principal encourages open discussions of all issues among faculty members and administrators, to date, parents, students, and community members have had very little involvement in the process of planning. The principal intends to create and enhance specific initiatives appreciated by the school community, including expanded robotics education and increased AP options. The school will benefit from a shared vision and from a formal system of parents, students, and community members. (principal, department chair, administrators, parents)

Besides the roles of department chairs, teachers have some, mostly ad hoc, opportunities for collegial leadership roles in the improvement of the high school. Teachers and department chairs routinely take the initiative of discussing improvements to student learning through changes in programs and policies. There have been department chair discussions about policies of AP and honors enrollment. Teachers also take the initiative of implementing new programs, including the Green Team and night classes. Teacher initiatives have led to numerous improvements and expansion of learning opportunities for students at Manchester Essex Regional High School. Special electives faculty members, including arts, health, physical education, technology, and music teachers, do not have a department chair. The teachers in that department use preparation time to manage resources and plan purchasing instead of concentrating on teacher preparation. While the principal meets routinely with chairs of core departments, he meets only occasionally with faculty members of the special electives courses. This current leadership inequality prevents teachers in these areas from engaging in activities that foster teacher leadership and contribute to the improvement of the school. (teachers, organization committee, principal)

Manchester Essex Regional High School capitalizes on the opportunities of a small student population to develop a close-knit school community where faculty and staff members and students develop meaningful relationships that advance civic, social, and academic experiences. With an average class size of 19 students and a total high school population at the time of the self-study of 394 students, the school provides an inclusive culture where students feel free to experience rigorous academic course while becoming involved in one or more of the many extra-curricular opportunities. The small school community has allowed some departments to join together in creating opportunities for students to build stronger understanding of human behavior and life conditions. For instance, the guidance department and the English department have worked together to build a Choice Theory curriculum that gives students the opportunity to study the psychological make-up of characters in literature. Students then apply that conceptual framework to better understand the triggers for certain actions and choices of their own or friends. Students at Manchester Essex Regional High School benefit academically and socially from the familiarity of a small school culture. (guidance department, self-study, teachers)

Despite a homogeneous student population, Manchester Essex Regional High School has made an effort to create an environment that fosters appreciation for human differences. Manchester Essex Regional High School has advanced student appreciation for diversity through the creation of the Diversity Alliance, a club that provides school-wide opportunities for greater understanding and tolerance of gender, ethnic, and cultural differences. In order to broaden student comprehension of global issues, the principal has included a global studies initiative in the Manchester Essex Regional High School 2009-10 Improvement Plan. Best Buddies, an after-school program that matches students enrolled in the special education program with regular education students, fosters relationships through shared social experiences. In core academic courses, there are formal prerequisites and standards for admission to honors and advanced placement courses, yet the school remains open to allowing students to take reasonable academic risks through override options. The faculty is currently discussing options for open enrollment in certain honors and advanced placement courses. As a result of these discussions and programs, various student populations are being linked through a shared goal of demonstrating respect for each other and the community. (students, principal, Manchester Essex Regional High School, 2009-10)

The current schedule allows teachers to complete instructional tasks that were not possible in shorter periods. The longer periods support a variety of instructional practices, including laboratory activities in science, math, and computer classes. Longer periods allow teachers to assess student understanding as part of an instructional lesson. In addition, longer periods permit a variety of instructional strategies, ranging from use of technology to lectures and presentations. Nevertheless, the new schedule does not allow teachers to collaborate, share and otherwise function as a professional learning community. According to teachers and administrators, there are no common preparation periods at the high school. Consequently, teachers lack the time to work together to build more cohesive academic, social and civic opportunities. (administrators, teachers, organization committee)

Manchester Essex Regional High School provides some opportunities for stakeholders to voice their opinions and contribute to the improvement of student learning experiences. For example, students were surveyed for their input during the change to the current schedule. Parents and students have been involved in the staff and faculty hiring process. In addition, parents contributed to the interior design choices for the new building. Student council has initiated changes to school protocol around the use of student electronic devices. However, parents, students, and community members are not directly involved in many key decisions. For example, students were not invited to participate in creating the mission statement and parents have not been consulted in revising the student handbook. The impact of not involving parents and/or students in such major decisions can be found in a lack of understanding and ownership of the school mission among students. The school would benefit from a more inclusive system of decision-making for the school community. (parents, teachers, self-study)

Manchester Essex Regional High School reports an average student-teacher ratio of 19:1 in regular education classrooms. In addition, the special education department provides

supplementary student support for those who qualify for individual education plans under the Individuals with Disabilities and Education Act (IDEA). Administrators and teachers report that some courses do cut off enrollment above certain set numbers. Among the courses that involve large student classes are some advanced placement and honors courses as well as electives. At this point, the overall class ratios are working in the best interests of individual students. (self-study, teachers, classroom observations)

As a result of its small student population, Manchester Essex Regional High School maintains a supportive and caring community. Faculty and staff members have the opportunity to interact informally with students often, and many report teaching or working with the same student several years. Such a small school community allows important mentoring to take place in casual and spontaneous ways. However, Manchester Essex Regional High School has yet to create a formal advisory program that will ensure a supportive relationship with a mentoring adult for every student to try to provide the most successful educational experiences. As a result of this lack of a formal program, teachers and staff may not serve all students equally. Some students, especially those who do not self-advocate, may not receive personalized attention during their individual educational experience at Manchester Essex Regional High School. (self-study, teachers, principal)

A few times a year, teachers have the opportunity to meet outside of teaching hours to work together to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment. During recent meetings, focus has turned to vertical integration for K-12 and preparation for the accreditation. However, the current school schedule does not allow teachers to collaborate during their free periods. While the teachers now have common workspace, there is no time in the school day for teachers with individual departments to use these spaces to work together on curriculum and planning. Department meetings and occasional early-release days appear to be the only opportunity teachers have to share ideas and concerns. The integration of interdisciplinary projects can happen only sporadically. There is thus very little collaboration on instruction and only assessment within departments and only informally between disciplines. (self-study, panel meeting, teachers)

Manchester Essex Regional High School faculty and staff are passionately committed to promoting the emotional, social, and academic well-being of their students. Faculty and staff members have developed a number of innovative programs to meet the needs of students. It is clear that the support staff including maintenance, paraprofessionals, cafeteria and secretarial staff care deeply for their students. The administration and teachers provide evening classes, including journalism and band. The SCORE program, a term-long internship at the end of senior year, introduces students to real life experiences. This commitment to extend programs beyond the school day and to introduce activities that deal with valid, relevant student concerns promotes the well-being and learning of students at Manchester Essex Regional High School. (self-study, teachers, guidance counselors)

Student successes at Manchester Essex Regional High School are recognized regularly through various media. Throughout the year, the school sponsors academic and awards

ceremonies, pep rallies, and regional honors banquet with area high schools. The school also acknowledges academic and extra-curricular excellence with scholarships, announcements about athletic team success, and hallway public displays of trophies and other awards. Regular recognition of these accomplishments clearly instills a sense of pride in students. (school tour, administrators, school newspaper, DECA brochure, self-study)

Students, teachers, and parents display pride in their school and in student academic and extra-curricular achievement at Manchester Essex Regional High School. Students describe a feeling of belonging and easy access to all kinds of courses and activities. Teachers and students also report maintaining close and mutually respectful relationships with each other. Parents appear committed to student success while also showing support and faith in the efforts of the teachers and administrators to provide a high quality education. This safe, positive, and respectful climate at Manchester Essex High School reflects students' pride and ownership in the school. (parents, teachers, students)

The school committee actively supports the implementation of the school's mission and expectations for student learning. The members have provided the principal with autonomy to make critical decisions in preparation for the move from the old school to the new as well as other major decisions. In order to avoid disruption of services, committee members have already begun to consider alternative funding options, including an endowment fund, in anticipation of budget constraints over the next few years. The school committee has also endorsed a decision to improve the cost effectiveness of transportation by contracting with a local transportation firm. Also, to reduce the budget, the district recently contracted out evening maintenance work as well. The school committee appears particularly eager to see further vertical integration of Essex and Manchester elementary curriculum with the secondary curriculum, with the intention of ensuring successful common preparation for students from these two communities for the rigorous academic expectations at Manchester Essex Regional High School. Furthermore, the school committee has supported the increase of school attendance expectations through policy for after school programs. In the past, students were required to be in school no later than 10:30 in order to be eligible for participation in extracurricular activities. Currently, the students must report to school by the end of the first period (8:44) to qualify for participation in after school activities. According to the attendance office, tardy arrivals have dropped materially since the institution of this policy. The school committee's commitment to endorsing policy changes, seeking alternative funding options, and actively pursuing ways to cut the budget in areas that will not impact student learning has allowed the Manchester-Essex Regional High School administration to adhere to the mission and advance student learning expectations. (school committee, administrators, superintendent)

COMMENDATIONS

1. The school committee and superintendent's support and trust in the principal's ability to make decisions
2. The principal's effective management of a major movement of faculty while maintaining a productive learning environment
3. Strong teacher commitment to student learning through their efforts above and beyond contract obligations by initiating changes and improvements
4. Teacher commitment to taking advantage of the small school environment to build relationships with many students and to create innovative learning opportunities
5. Manchester Essex Regional High School's taking advantage of its existing resources to bring students together creatively in activity groups that advance the civic and social aspects of the mission
6. The willingness of Manchester Essex Regional High School to allow and encourage students to take appropriate academic risks through override enrollment in honors and AP courses
7. The use of the new longer periods to implement a wider variety of instructional strategies and practices and to assess student learning as part of instruction
8. The maintenance of class sizes that allow attention to individual student needs
9. The visible strong ties between many adults and students at Manchester Essex Regional High School
10. Despite the lack of formal time to do so, the commitment of teachers to create and review departmental and interdisciplinary curriculum
11. The passionate and innovative efforts of teachers to promote the well-being of individual students through special activities and informal mentoring relationships
12. Genuine and frequent celebration of student success and achievement
13. The dedication of the faculty and staff that has resulted in a safe and friendly environment where students feel they are valued and can achieve academic success
14. The school committee's support of the school's mission and expectations for student learning

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Create opportunities for the development of a common vision in a clear process involving staff, faculty, students, parents, and members of the two towns' communities
2. Examine ways to provide the special electives department teachers more voice at the leadership level
3. Explore different ways to involve parents, students, and community members in policy and protocol decisions at Manchester Essex Regional High School
4. Implement a formal advisory program involving all Manchester Essex High School faculty members and students
5. Provide opportunities for teachers to meet and collaborate within and across departments in order to address such needs as common planning time, examination of student work and development and refinement of curriculum

SUPPORT STANDARDS

6. 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 enhance student learning by 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.

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

1. 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

At Manchester Essex Regional High School, student support services are designed to assist students and faculty members meet the demands and expectations of the school's mission statement. Guidance, health, library/media, and special education programs encourage students to accept challenges. Students have access to a wide variety of resources that support improved student learning and success in the academic program and they help prepare students for the future and provide opportunities to explore the world beyond their immediate environment. Examples of the student support personnel implementing the school's mission include the nurse's efforts to empower the students to think critically about their physical health and develop strategies to deal with illnesses in a positive manner and library personnel instruction and support in choosing materials that develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Support service staff members clearly demonstrate their dedication to providing the framework that will foster student learning, but there is no formal process to regularly examine and evaluate whether the support services align with the school's mission. Because student support services are consistent with the school's mission and expectations for student learning, students feel supported and are able to engage in a curriculum that encourages individual growth. (self-study, support staff, teachers.)

In keeping with the mission statement, the school promotes equal opportunity for students to achieve the school's expectations for student learning. There has been growth in the student population and an increased demand for special needs services, but staffing and programs in special education, guidance, health, and library/media services have not grown and, in some instances have been reduced. As noted in the course catalog, a range of courses is offered to meet the needs and interests of all students. In addition, there is a dual enrollment program that allows students to take courses at local colleges that count both toward high school graduation and as college credit, very popular and much lauded Debate and DECA programs, and an expanding Authentic Science Research Program. Students have access to technical programs provided by two local vocational high schools. There are also many civic and social clubs and organizations, such as National Honor Society (NHS), the Diversity Alliance which works with the community HEART group, Green Team, Journalism Club, Math League, the National Art Honor Society, student council, Science League, yearbook team, and peer leadership. The school also supports the success of students through the learning center and technology resources. Manchester Essex has a flexible schedule, allowing students to take some courses or participate in activities in the evening. In addition, a substantially separate special education program was introduced this year to allow students with severe special needs to remain in their home district, although there is concern about fully meeting the academic needs of these students. Despite the many offerings, staffing has not grown concurrent with the increased student population. As a result, support services personnel are concerned about their ability to provide services to meet the needs of all students. (teachers, course directory, support staff, student shadowing, central office personnel)

Teachers, administrators, and parents refer students experiencing difficulty to the school's guidance and health services. In addition, students may refer themselves or their peers for assistance. Internally, the school has a student assistance team which

meets bi-weekly. The team serves as a formal referral vehicle (e.g. to the learning center), discusses concerns related to identified students, makes referrals, and continually assesses student progress. The guidance staff is also responsible for creating, implementing, and evaluating students' Chapter 504 plans. CCI (community collaborative initiative) meetings are held monthly and include district attorneys, police, and fire representatives, department of family services personnel, the middle and high school principals, the school nurse, and all school counselors who discuss general and specific concerns about students. Student support staff members have an updated list of area counselors with whom they consistently communicate. Manchester Essex employs a private counselor who works with students two days a week. Referral to the nurse and communication with primary care physicians also takes place. Student support personnel respect confidentiality while working to coordinate services with students, families, and professionals. Counselors report a decreasing incidence of substance abuse within the school; at the same time, they are aware students are involved in experimentation. The new athletic director has instituted a program for all athletes and their parents regarding substance abuse. There is no school-wide initiative in this area although there are plans to implement a plan next year. Student assistance services are designed to reduce student risk factors and to promote protective factors. The school adjustment counselor works closely with teachers and guidance and health personnel services to ensure students' needs are being addressed. She has developed and implemented a "Making Healthy Choices" program and teaches "choice theory" through the English classes utilizing required reading characters to educate students about making healthy choices. There is also a "Connections Program", in which all staff members identify students they have a connection with and any student without a "connection" is targeted to ensure he or she is given a mentor. There is no formal advisory program. A guidance counselor has been appointed to the professional development team to facilitate introducing and expanding student service initiatives through faculty training. The librarian works with faculty members to address academic research needs of students. Some teachers request research instruction for their students, and some give input into material selection. Membership in the Northeast Massachusetts Regional Library Association allows students and staff members to access resources outside of the school to address student needs. It also provides library personnel to work with other libraries to procure supplementary materials when students' needs are not met by the library's collection. Resources are shared among libraries within the district and outside libraries. The librarian engages staff members from all facets of the school in developing a summer reading program that has been identified as very successful with staff and students. Student support staff members work diligently with school and community resources to ensure that students' academic, social, emotional, and physical needs are addressed. The professionalism and dedication of the special services staff has fostered an environment where students feel valued as a part of the community and are comfortable utilizing services when needed. (teachers, student shadowing, students, school support staff.)

There is no formal review or evaluation of service delivery performed by the support services staff. While there is no formal structure for evaluating guidance programs, counselors consistently examine student performance and achievement to judge the effectiveness of services and tools used to ensure that all students have an equal

opportunity to achieve the school's expectations for student learning. The librarian revises services and material collection based on ongoing feedback from students and faculty and staff members. Health services are informally evaluated internally on an ongoing basis. A daily log of student visits to the health office is maintained, and this data is used as one source of evaluating health services. The nurse, guidance, and special education staff meet regularly to discuss and review individual and school-wide student needs. This allows for the effective integration of student services. Although guidance staff members rely on unofficial input from staff, parents, and students to judge the effectiveness of their programs, there is currently no system in place for regular survey feedback from students, parents, and teachers for an overall evaluation of the guidance services. The lack of an objective evaluation process results in missed opportunities for reflection and makes it difficult to base program changes and improvements on concrete data. (support staff members, self-study, teachers).

All support service staff members demonstrate effective and ongoing communication with students, parents, guardians, and school personnel on both group and individual levels. Support personnel use websites, frequent e-mails, ConnectEd, Naviance, the principal's monthly newsletter, weekly progress updates, letters mailed home, coffees, and presentations and workshops to keep stakeholders abreast of upcoming dates and important announcements and informed about programs and school events. In addition to general messages, specific groups are targeted as needed. For example, throughout the year, guidance counselors meet with students new to the district to ease their transition to the Manchester Essex Regional High School. The staff holds a college planning evening for juniors and their parents. There is a financial aid night for seniors and their parents. Counselors work individually with students and parents to provide information about school and community resources. The school nurse has developed and maintains a website to assist students and their families find relevant health and wellness information. She also contacts parents/guardians to discuss health concerns as needed. The school's special education department has a detailed system for effective and ongoing communication with the parents and school personnel relevant to students who have individualized education plans. Each Friday, the resource room teachers contact each student's teachers to request individual progress reports. These reports are e-mailed to the student's parents to facilitate home/school communication. The use of varied and frequent communications has resulted in effective distribution of information to stakeholders, thus improving home-school communication from the support services departments. (self-study, parents, panel presentation, support staff members, student shadowing, observation)

Modular Management System Documentation Software allows access to students' academic and health records for authorized school personnel. Current student biographical and academic files are kept in the guidance office in locked file cabinets with access monitored by the guidance staff. Records of graduates are kept in a locked fireproof vault. Records for withdrawn and transferred students are also stored there. Health and immunization records of current students are kept in locked file cabinets in the nurse's office; 88% of parents responding to the self-study trust their child's health/medical records would remain confidential. Special education records are kept in

locked file cabinets in the special education office. Library circulation records are password protected. Since the school support staff members maintain records in a secured manner consistent with federal and state laws, confidentiality is maintained. (Endicott Survey, classroom observation, school support staff)

All support services professional staff members are properly licensed and certified. Determining the school's current student to support staff ratio is complicated by the fact that school resource personnel are responsible for both the middle and high school student population. The high school guidance staff consists of two full-time counselors (one of whom acts as the director of guidance) and one administrative assistant. They provide services for 450 high school students (2009-2010). While the high school pupil ratio is approximately 200 students for the director and 225 for the second counselor, the director and administrative assistant are also responsible for managing the total high school/middle school population of 800 students. Health services are provided for both the middle and high school by one full-time nurse. This provides a ratio of approximately 800 students to one health provider. The department of public health recommends a 1 to 500 ratio. The library is staffed by one FTE librarian and one part-time library assistant (two hours a day, she supervises the cafeteria). Library standards recommend one full-time professional librarian and one FTE assistant for every 500 students. The school employs five full-time special educators, and two full-time teaching assistants. One of the five teachers acts as the out-of-district coordinator, team chair, and school psychologist. Forty-eight students have been identified as having special needs for whom an individualized education plan (IEP) has been written and accepted. This year, there was the addition of a self-contained classroom for students with extensive special needs (serving six students during the 09-10 school year). The limited support staff shared between the high and middle schools causes concern about the ability to provide full services to all students. (support service staff, self-study, panel presentation)

In keeping with the guidance department's primary goal of providing students with information and resources to make informed choices related to academics, career/college, and social emotional issues, counselors offer a full range of comprehensive guidance services. The school has a comprehensive, developmentally-based program which includes classroom presentations, large community events, parent evenings, outreach efforts, and individual student meetings. Guidance counselors offer a wide range of services in the following areas: response services (intake, crisis intervention, and referral), academic planning, intervention and support, personal/social counseling, and future planning for careers and postsecondary education. Students and/or parents may seek out guidance services. The guidance counselors have created a guidance curriculum. Freshman year they focus on transitioning students into the high school. Sophomore year begins the process of career planning and self-assessment. Guidance counselors visit junior classrooms to teach how to research colleges and create a comprehensive testing plan which includes PSATs, SATs, and ACTs. Senior year concentrates on assisting students plan their post secondary career whether it includes additional education, moving into the work force, or joining the military. Annually, the

guidance department offers a student/ parent college night and financial aid night. They also work with students in group and individual settings to discuss course selection. Counselors meet individually with each eleventh and twelfth grader as well as most underclassmen. The amount of ongoing contact is determined by student need. Over 98% of guidance work is done one on one with students. The guidance department coordinates the forty hour community service graduation requirement which is a part of the student program from grade nine through twelve. Seventy-five percent of the juniors have not only met but exceed the forty hour requirement yet continue to participate in the program during their senior year. When students are in need of involved or ongoing counseling, guidance counselors refer them to the school adjustment counselor, a part-time therapist who provides in-house services, and to many area therapists. The school adjustment counselor offers individual check-ins with students on a weekly, bi-weekly, or as-needed basis on topics such as time and stress management, body image issues, self-esteem issues, academic difficulties, future planning, family problems, and any other pertinent issues. In addition to her work with the general student population and class and curriculum development work, the student adjustment counselor provides individual counseling to thirty students whose individual education plans mandate counseling services. Since the guidance department provides comprehensive guidance services to all students, each student is seen from a holistic perspective and an overall sense of confidence in the school's guidance services is expressed by parents, staff, and students. (self-study, Endicott Survey, students, parents, artifacts)

The health service program includes health appraisal, counseling, communicable disease control, emergency aid, and first aid. These health services are delivered in accordance with the district's written policies and procedures and requirements of state law relative to vision and hearing screening, immunization, and child abuse reporting. The increasing number of students with specific health needs has changed the demands and responsibilities of the health office over the past few years. The school nurse trains staff members in dealing with life-threatening emergencies, EPI pen administration, universal precautions, and CPR. She also acts as a resource for classroom teachers when health related topics are discussed. All student health, medical, and immunization information is requested/obtained and updated annually. Information is shared with teachers and staff members on a need-to-know basis in accordance with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Ninety percent of staff members indicated the school nurse keeps them apprised of each student's individual health needs. The school nurse works closely with the school adjustment counselor, school guidance counselors and special educators. The nurse attends the student assistance team and community collaborative initiative meetings. She is also a member of the district's wellness committee. The existing caseload allows for triaging, yet hinders regular planning, follow-up, consultation, health counseling, and pro-active health promotion. (Endicott Survey, teachers, observation, website, handouts)

The librarian's main role in the instructional program is to support teachers in their planning. The librarian is rarely involved with formal curriculum planning, and there is no formal information literacy curriculum. The Endicott Survey reported that 47.8% of the staff has consulted the school's librarian when developing or revising curriculum,

though 63% of the staff agrees that the formal curriculum in their subject area includes library/information services components. An example of library/information services in formal curriculum can be found in the summer reading program. There are library/information services components in the curriculum, and 67% of the students agree that the library has the materials they need, even though only about 44% of the students agrees that the library is often used during classes. Though the library/information services are available, library is not an "integral part of the instructional program". The library/information services program does not have a systematic plan in place to ensure that the print collection is aligned with and in support of the curriculum. Although informal connections made with staff members to support student learning takes place, formal inclusion in the curriculum development process is limited as a result of the time constraints and related boundaries placed on the librarian. These constraints have resulted in the librarian not being able to fully support the curriculum needs of students or staff. (Endicott Survey, teachers, observations, self-study, support staff)

In a survey of staff, 84.8% agreed that library personnel "are knowledgeable to assist me in my curriculum and instructional needs". While this knowledge certainly varies from class to class, teachers of content areas which require access to library resources clearly feel that the library staff members are knowledgeable and supportive of their work. The English, social studies, and debate staff collaborate extensively with library staff members and make use of library resources, especially with the ninth grade English/history cross curricular research paper. Members of the library staff communicate with faculty members on an informal basis to discuss how to best meet individual and department needs. In addition, the library staff brings reviews and descriptions of new materials to the attention of individual departments and/or teachers for the purpose of purchasing. The lack of formal inclusion in curriculum development negatively impacts the depth and breadth of support the library/media services can provide. (Endicott Survey, teachers, support staff)

The library has a mid-sized collection of approximately 10,000 books, videos, and periodicals. The print collection has been extensively weeded and updated to support the curriculum. These materials afford most students the chance to access and utilize information at an appropriate level. The Endicott Survey indicates that 78.2% of the staff agrees that the print, non-print, and technological resources are adequate in the library. Staff and students have expressed enthusiasm for the new facility and resources available in the new library. Computers and Internet access is available throughout the school for individual use, in small clusters, and in labs. In addition, students are allowed to access the school's network on their personal computers during the school day. Library/information services offer numerous online subscription databases (e.g. *InfoTrac*, *GrolierOnline*, *Sirs Mandarin*, and *The Boston Globe*) are available to all students, faculty and staff from both school and home. The new facility has incorporated audio-visual and electronic tools such as LCD projectors and e-notebooks into each classroom and the library facility. According to the Endicott Survey, 64.2% of the faculty uses the available technology, and 86.2% agrees that the technical resources are widely available and integral to teaching in all classrooms. This survey was completed prior to the move into the new school and the

introduction of some new technology. While there now is extensive availability of technology, there is no structured plan to provide equitable access to the resources, either physically or by providing training. This year, library media services voluntarily reduced its budget in order to prevent the reduction of services at the elementary level. Dependable funding must be available to maintain the range of resources that are current and relevant to support the curriculum and provide for student interests. There is a wide range of resources available, and they are extensively used by students and staff members to improve student learning. (classroom observations, school support staff, Endicott Survey, students, self-study, facility tour)

The library is open 30 minutes before the start of school and remains open for 75 minutes after dismissal time. These hours are posted in prominent locations, on the library's website, and in the library's brochure. The Endicott Survey indicated that 83% of students agreed that the library is available before, during, and after the school day. Sufficient space to accommodate twenty-five individual users is available, and one class can be served each period. There are approximately forty computers, with presentation hardware available for student and/or class use. These are frequently used. The library is heavily trafficked during the school year. On a daily basis, an average of twelve teachers bring their classes to access both print and non-print or electronic resources available in the library. In addition, approximately 96 individual students use the library daily. After hours, students and faculty members are still able to access the library website and use the databases, library catalog, and other links and information. The library's flexible schedule maximizes the use of library resources, and the increased space and availability of electronic resources has increased student access to library services. (panel presentation, meetings with teachers, student shadowing, school support staff, teacher interview)

There is a seventh grade orientation to the library and research skills instruction and another orientation for ninth graders on searching, plagiarism, and citations, but there is no formal process for reinforcing or refining the skills that would foster independent inquiry for students. The librarian works with individual teachers when requested and has been proactive in pursuing collaborative opportunities with staff members in order to help students develop research skills. Generally, the librarian and the library staff serve the faculty as a support resource and collaborative instructor. The absence of a formal program or information literacy curriculum hinders the librarian from fully instructing students in the skills and practice necessary for a highly effective and independent inquiry process. Community information resources are available through use of on-line databases and collaborative efforts with the public librarian to train students in the use of various databases. This provides students with the opportunity to access a vast amount of information.

The librarian oversees a unique summer reading program that encourages all faculty and staff members to contribute the name of their favorite book with a brief review. These books are then displayed, and students pick their top three choices. They are required to read one of these books. During the first week of school, all students report on their books, and the person whose "favorite" book was chosen is revealed. This contributes to the sense of community and encourages students to appreciate reading as a life-long

activity. The librarian has developed a “Visiting Author” program funded by contributions she solicits from the community. This spring, there will be an author’s fair with more than ten authors coming to Manchester Essex Regional High School over the course of a week. The authors, both fiction and non-fiction, will work with teachers and students in their classrooms as well as do presentations for the community. The programs developed by the librarian have expanded students’ opportunities and enhanced the learning experience. (teachers, self-study, school support staff, students)

An "Acceptable Use Policy" is in place. All students, parents, and staff members are required to read and sign it. “The Internet Safety and Network Use Policy" is in the student and faculty handbooks and is enforced by the teachers, staff members, administrators, and the network administrator; 88.7% of the students indicated that they are aware of the school’s policy regarding Internet use. Blocking access to inappropriate information is accomplished through the use of the 8e6 Enterprise Internet filtering program. A materials selection policy is used to select materials that support the curriculum and student learning and to remove materials that are no longer appropriate. The application of these policies has provided the students and staff with valuable information resources that support the curriculum and students’ personal growth and learning. (classroom observations, self-study, student shadowing, support staff)

A student referral can be made to the special education department by a parent, teacher, a guidance counselor, or student. In most cases, a referral is made initially to the student assistance team. However, if a parent requests a special education evaluation, the request is processed without going through the SAT, and an evaluation is completed as soon as possible. The referral, evaluation, and educational plan development and implementation process follows applicable state and federal legislation. Parents' Rights in Special Education documents are provided and explained at evaluation meetings, individualized education plan meetings, and when due process is considered. The school’s inclusion policy of mainstreaming promotes maximum involvement in regular classes for all students with disabilities. Individualized education plans (IEPs) are written to address specific remediation, alternative delivery systems, goal-setting, classroom accommodations, and modifications that make this mainstreaming possible. When the individualized education plan team determines that services cannot be provided within the school system, outside educational placements are made. Individualized Education plan meetings are held annually and evaluations are completed every three years. The attentive nature of the team processes at Manchester Essex Regional High School ensure that students are carefully supported to address a variety of needs. (special education program literature, support staff members, teachers)

COMMENDATIONS

1. The professionalism and dedication of support services staff members
2. The quality and quantity of opportunities available to all students
3. School counselors who provide valuable assistance to students in planning and succeeding in their current and future education and vocations through a comprehensive system of student support
4. The informative and well maintained health services website
5. The high quality of support services programs including
 - The Authentic Science Research Program
 - The “Making Healthy Choices” program
 - The Community Service program encompassing students from grades 9 through 12
6. The summer reading program that involves all faculty and staff with students
7. The “Visiting Authors” program developed by the librarian
8. The extensive availability of technology resources
9. The availability of the library facility before and after school
10. Creative use of instructional space in the library

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure student support services have sufficient resources to meet growing demands
2. Assess the quality of services given existing resources
3. Examine the percentage of time in group vs. small group vs. individual counseling service delivery
4. Establish an advisory program with time specified and a curriculum so that all students have an advisory relationship
5. Establish an objective protocol that encourages data-driven regular feedback from students, parents, and teachers for regularly evaluating and improving all student support services
6. Develop and implement a protocol for collaborative planning among classroom teachers and librarians to help integrate library media resources and services into the curriculum
7. Create and implement a systematic plan to ensure that the library collection is aligned with and in support of the curriculum
8. Develop and integrate a library curriculum that ensures research skill training for all students

**STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION
SUPPORT STANDARDS**

7. 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

The Manchester Essex Regional High School effectively informs about student progress and school programs in a variety of ways but fails to routinely give parents a role in the development of policies and programs that affect students' education. Software that relays important information to parents via telephone and e-mail is used on a weekly basis. The school hosts an open house to inform parents about their students' classes and also has a financial aid night. The guidance department hosts an annual series of morning coffees and afternoon teas that allow parents to raise and discuss issues that are of importance and concern to them and their children. The principal and department chairs contribute to the principal's newsletter which is available on-line. Local periodicals (*The Cricket*, *The Gloucester Times*) are frequently contacted by school administrators and given updates regarding happenings in the school. These updates may include information about upcoming events, recognition of school and individual student and teacher successes, or reports about major issues faced by the school. Parents are informed about exhibits, drama productions, award ceremonies, and banquets using all of the above-mentioned avenues of communication. Parents are active as athletic boosters and are involved in promoting special events like MERHS International Week and field trips overseas. Several parents with students at Manchester Essex Regional High School are regularly invited to act as partners by serving as members of the school improvement council which is responsible for approving many initiatives but not always responsible for development. A parent participated in the development of the school's mission and expectations. Parents of Manchester Essex Regional High School students are actively engaged in and supportive of their children's' education. However, the staff of Manchester Essex Regional High School has not fully engaged parents as partners in formalized school decision-making processes and school programs in addition to parent support groups.

While the ongoing communication with parents has fostered strong support among parents for the work being done by the school, Manchester Essex Regional High School does not regularly and actively seek to engage the majority of parents and families as partners in all students' education, resulting in the loss of input from a very important segment of the school community and risking community ignorance of school needs and initiatives that may require funding. (self-study, panel presentation, documentation, administrators, parents, staff members, and students)

The Manchester Essex Regional High School has developed strong and productive business / community and higher education partnerships to support student learning. There is a wide variety of vehicles through which these partnerships have been formed. The SCORE program, work-study, and Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) allow students to explore potential careers through working with community mentors. The relationships established through Authentic Science Research with Boston University City Labs and Cell Signaling Technology allow students to interact with professional research scientists in professional settings. They further support student efforts in scientific competitions, research grant applications, and employment during and beyond high school. There is also a monthly science speaker program which brings science professionals from the community into the school to speak with students about a

variety of topics and career opportunities in the sciences. Several community organizations support a variety of curricular and enrichment programs within the school. Cell Signaling Technology, The Spaulding Education Fund, and the Hooper fund support such programs as Robotics, Physics First, the Weather Bug Station, and Electronic Probeware for science. Other community organizations provide significant support for the school's efforts. Included, among those organizations are the Athletic Boosters, PTO, Manchester Community Center, the Manchester Rotary Club, Northeast Health Systems, HAWC, the Essex County District Attorney's Office, and the local cable television station.

Students participate in a variety of amateur and professional community theater programs each year. Manchester Essex Regional High School students also participate in outreach to the community through the guidance department directed community service program. More than 1,000 hours of community service are performed by students each year. Manchester Essex Regional High School has worked hard to develop strong community partnerships, and those partnerships have proven to be beneficial to the school, the students, and the community. (self-study, panel presentation, parents, administrators, staff members, students)

While the site is still in need of completion, the Manchester Essex Regional High School building clearly supports and enhances all aspects of the educational program and the support services for student learning. The Manchester Essex Regional School District has just completed a new state of the art facility, funded by the two communities through a \$49,000,000 debt exclusion override. The students, parents, faculty members, administrators, support service staff, and facilities manager all express great satisfaction with the site and plant. Classrooms (generally 900-1000 square feet) provide adequate space for learning. Classrooms are equipped with digital projectors, SMARTBoards, in-house sound systems and are comfortable and aesthetically pleasing in décor. Science classrooms/labs (1100 square feet) are well equipped with appropriate tables, gas outlets, sinks, electrical power strips, and data ports. Science and art classrooms are fully equipped with all appropriate safety equipment including hoods, showers, eye washes, and safety alarms. Music, art and physical education facilities are well equipped with well designed acoustics. The auditorium has been designed to be used as a state-of-the-art performance facility with computer controlled lighting and sound systems and the mechanisms to fly scenery and additional lighting. The building provides several additional areas where a large group can be addressed with support of suitable technology. Common spaces are comfortable, spacious, and inviting. Traffic flows easily through hallways. Members of the school community report that they never feel crowded.

State-of-the-art, environmentally sensitive systems including HVAC, lighting, and instructional and administrative technology have been provided throughout the building. The heating, ventilation, air conditioning, electrical, security, and mechanical systems, much of which has been located in roof top "Penthouses," enables staff members to operate the building efficiently and provide a consistent and comfortable environment in which the work of Manchester Essex Regional High School can take place. Storage

space has been inconsistently provided, however Science work rooms have been thoughtfully designed and equipped as have art, music, and physical education areas. However, there is a significant lack of storage space in other areas of the building. Most evident is the lack of a stagecraft room and space to store sets and props necessary for the high quality theater program provided by Manchester Essex Regional High School. The lack of a maintenance workshop has required the use of a vacant building formerly used by the town of Manchester's Water Department for storage of equipment and a maintenance workshop. Departmental book and equipment storage on each academic floor is limited as well. Some frustrations have been expressed by students, faculty members, and administrators about delays in the accessibility of software housed in a central server; however, the faculty and administration are alike in their faith that "bugs" will be worked out of this very new technology infrastructure.

A singular aspect of the Manchester Essex Regional High School's educational program is its emphasis on conservation and environmentally sound principles. Generally implemented by the school's "Green Team," a student organization that receives substantial support from both a teacher advisor and the facilities manager, the environmental conservation program is remarkably supported by the facility. A thorough recycling program is in place in all classrooms, common areas, and the cafeteria. The school has eliminated a significant amount of its waste while increasing its output of recyclable materials. The building has been constructed to maximize ambient light and has an electrical lighting system that responds to the amount of ambient light available. Throughout the building, there is signage that identifies and explains some aspect of environmentally sound design utilized by the site. The Manchester Essex Regional High School community can be proud of its excellent facility which supports the work of the school and promotes student achievement. The remarkable way the facility enhances the environmental program in the school is representative of how the building supports the educational program as a whole. Rectifying the lack of storage for some programs will improve their ability to provide appropriate supports for student programs. (facilities manager, facilities tour, classroom observations, teachers, students, parents)

Documentation in the form of occupancy permits, inspection permits, and conversations with the director of facilities and the high school principal confirm that the Manchester Essex Regional High School physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. The Manchester Essex Regional High School has exceeded minimal legal requirements and local regulations. However, the athletic fields are still under construction and silt traps remain in place over drainage devices. The director of facilities remains confident that the final steps in the completion of the site will also meet all codes and requirements. The physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and comply with local fire, health, and safety regulations. Site work remains to be completed and careful oversight of the final construction work needs to be maintained. The completion of this new building will provide Manchester Essex Regional High School students with a facility that will support the school's educational programs for many decades. (facilities manager, facilities tour, teachers, students, parents)

Manchester Essex Regional High School is a new facility. All equipment and furniture is also new. The principal, business manager, and facilities manager have complete catalogues of all new equipment and are currently developing long-term repair and replacement plans. The previous well-constructed catalogue and repair and replacement plan for technology equipment serves as a model for the new catalogues. Day to day maintenance is currently managed with the *School Dude* work order program which will provide data and direction for maintenance, repair, and replacement plans. Long-term repair, and replacement plans, connected to a well constructed material and equipment catalogue will allow Manchester Essex Regional High School to properly maintain the quality and efficacy of its equipment. (facilities manager, facilities tour, leadership team)

Although a planned and adequately funded program of building and site management to ensure the appropriate maintenance, repair, and cleanliness of the school plant is still in the process of being developed, Manchester Essex Regional High School's leadership team has allocated adequate funds to support a forthcoming plan. Manchester Essex Regional High School has a history of developing long-range five-year maintenance budget plans. However, as the school enters a new building, there is no history for the new equipment and materials on which to base a long-term plan. The facilities manager, the principal and the business manager are using data collected during the first year of operation to formulate short-term adjustments and as a base on which to build a long-term plan. Currently, the FY10 heating, utilities, and maintenance operations budget for the high school is approximately double that of FY09. The facilities manager demonstrates intimate knowledge of the operations, systems, administrative needs, teaching needs, learning needs, and equipment in the building that will aid in developing effective plans. The facilities manager has ensured that all maintenance and custodial staff have been trained by equipment manufacturers to use the new state of the art, sophisticated systems and equipment, the operation of which requires a highly trained staff. He has also ensured that the manufacturer's training has been videotaped for future use with new employees and to refresh current staff members. All food service staff has been trained to use the new kitchen equipment, and CDs have been provided to train future food service employees. All current food service staff members are *FoodSafe* trained and *CPR* certified. The building is currently clean throughout and with the contracting out of some of the cleaning duties, the building is currently adequately staffed for the maintenance, repair, and cleaning of the plant. The development of a long-term maintenance and funding plan will help Manchester Essex Regional High School to take full advantage of the investments that have been made in the new facility. (self-study, facilities tour, school administrators, central office administrators, facilities manager, food service director)

Manchester Essex Regional High School has neither a current technology plan nor a current capital improvement plan but is in the process of developing those plans. A formal planning process for the community's addressing of future programming, enrollment, and staffing needs is in the developmental stage. For the past five years, the district has concentrated on planning for the move into the new Manchester Essex Regional High School. The intention has been that, at the time of the facilities completion, an ongoing five-year strategic plan would be implemented to provide for the

continuous adjustment of the district's services to meet its future needs. As part of the FY10 District Improvement Plan, the district is committed to develop this five-year strategic plan. The development of a new five-year district strategic plan to address future programs, enrollment changes, staffing, facility, and technology needs as well as capital improvements will help to ensure continuous improvement and growth. (self-study, leadership team, central office administrators)

The residents of the towns of Manchester-by-the-Sea and Essex have traditionally provided significant support for the Manchester Essex Regional High School thereby ensuring 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. Both the towns of Manchester-by-the-Sea and Essex have made adequate provisions for the Manchester Essex Regional School District in their municipal operational budget overrides. Members of the community and the school committee and staff stated that they believe that including the schools within the municipal efforts rather than having separate overrides for the school indicates a high degree of support within the community for appropriate funding of the schools. Indeed, both communities approved the \$49,000,000, bond issue and debt exclusion override to build the new Manchester Essex Regional High School without the assurance of reimbursement from the Massachusetts School Building Authority. Subsequently, the school committee has learned that the towns will receive reimbursement in the amount of \$19,000,000, reducing the building costs to the towns to approximately \$30,000,000. The school committee believes that while the present budget is "healthy", future funding may be difficult. While no programs have been reduced or eliminated to date, the school committee is investigating alternative, less costly methods of achieving current goals. There is great concern about the continuing ability of the communities to maintain the necessary economic support for the school. The school committee has recently increased student athletic participation fees incrementally from \$165 per year to \$295 per year to help support the costs of athletic programs. The school committee reports that it is focused on finding alternative funding sources to maintain teaching and curricular programs. The school committee has decided to hire a development director to lead the efforts to find funding to bolster enrichment programs and to establish an endowment to provide for permanent, ongoing funding for Manchester Essex Regional High School. Continued success of the Manchester Essex Regional High School is dependent on the communities and the Manchester Essex Regional School Committee continuing to 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. Additional, non-traditional funding will help to reduce the impact of fluctuating economic conditions on school funding requirements. (self-study, parents, school committee, administrators, central office administrators)

The faculty and building administrators at Manchester Essex Regional High School have opportunities for appropriate active involvement in the budgetary process, including its development and implementation. The principal has authority to expend funds allocated to his school; department chairs and faculty members have the authority to determine

how to expend the funds allocated to their departments. Faculty members report that they have discussions with department chairs to determine departmental budget desires and priorities. Department chairs report that they work with the principal in developing the high school's budget proposal to present to the superintendent and central office administration. Faculty members expressed the desire to have a more active role in the development of the budget while simultaneously recognizing the efficacy and practicality of the current budget development model. The principal reports that he is an active participant in shaping the superintendent's district proposal which he then brings back to the Manchester Essex Regional High School Leadership Team (department chairs and administrators) for collaborative reshaping of the high school budget proposal. The school committee, building administrators, and teachers all report that the school committee has at times made changes to budget allocations without soliciting the support of central office administrators, building administrators, and faculty members. By continuing to provide opportunities for the faculty and building administrators to participate in the development and implementation of the budget and by soliciting support for budget decisions that may not be developed with those groups, the Manchester Essex Regional School District will best serve the interests of its students. (self-study, school committee, teachers, administrators)

COMMENDATIONS

1. The communities' support for Manchester Essex Regional High School as demonstrated by the funding for the new high school facility
2. The effort to keep parents informed about school activities through a variety of methods
3. The guidance department's offering of morning coffees and afternoon teas to provide parents opportunities to talk about issues and concerns
4. The partnerships developed with local businesses, community organizations and higher education, local foundations, and other area schools
5. The newly completed state-of-the-art high school
6. The training on new equipment provided to maintenance and food service staff
7. The environmental sensitivity with which the new school has been designed;
8. The high energy and effective environmental awareness program sponsored by the student led "Green Team";
9. The knowledge and high quality of leadership demonstrated by the Facilities Manager.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Manchester Essex Regional High School should actively seek to fully engage parents and the community as partners in making decisions about the education of their students
2. Ensure that the site work is completed
3. Address the lack of storage space for some programs
4. Develop and implement long-term repair and replacement plans for furniture, equipment, and technology
5. Develop and implement a long-term maintenance plan;
6. Develop and implement a new five-year district strategic plan to address future programs, enrollment changes, staffing, facility, technology, and capital improvements
7. Ensure an adequate and dependable source of revenue to continue to support school programs

FOLLOW UP REPSONSIBLITIES

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 Manchester Essex Regional 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 Manchester Essex Regional 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 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 reports 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. 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 date 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 that 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.

In closing, the members of the Manchester Essex High School Visiting Team would like to express our sincere appreciation to the entire school staff, students, parents, and the communities of Manchester-by-the-Sea and Essex for the welcome, hospitality, and cooperation extended to the team during our visit. Your kindness, participation, and effort made the hard work of the visiting team an enjoyable and worthwhile professional endeavor.

**APPENDIX A
ROSTER OF TEAM MEMBERS**

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APPENDIX B

CPSS SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

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

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