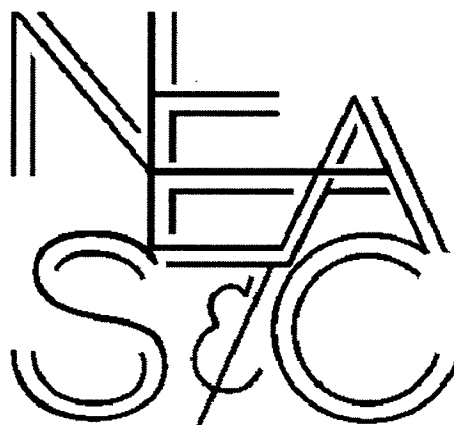


NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS



REPORT OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE

Arlington High School

Arlington, Massachusetts

December 2 - December 5, 2012

Timothy Sullivan, Chair

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STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS

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

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

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

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INTRODUCTION

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

The governing body of the Association is its Board of Trustees which supervises the work of four Commissions: the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE), the Commission on Independent Schools (CIS), the Commission on Public Schools which is comprised of the Committee on Public Secondary Schools (CPSS), the 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 Committee. Those Standards are:

Teaching and Learning Standards

- Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

- Curriculum

- Instruction

- Assessment of and for Student Learning

Support of Teaching and Learning Standards

- School Culture and Leadership

- School Resources for Learning

- Community Resources for Learning.

The accreditation program for public schools involves a threefold process: the self-study conducted by the local professional staff, the on-site evaluation conducted by the Committee's visiting 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 Committee in the Follow-Up process. Continued accreditation requires that the school be reevaluated at least once every ten years and that it show continued progress addressing identified needs.

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit - The School Self-Study

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At Arlington High School a committee of 15 members, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned all teachers and administrators in the school to appropriate subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities and facilities available for young people.

The self-study of Arlington High School extended over a period of 20 school months from October 2010 to September 2012.

Public schools evaluated by the Committee 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 Committee, Arlington High School also used questionnaires developed by The Research Center at Endicott College to reflect the concepts contained in the Standards for Accreditation. These materials provided discussion items for a comprehensive assessment of the school by the professional staff during the self-study.

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

The Process Used by the Visiting Committee

A visiting committee of 16 evaluators was assigned by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate Arlington High School. The Committee members spent four days in

Arlington, 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 Committee's Standards for Accreditation. Since the evaluators represented public schools, central office administrators, and the public diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Arlington High School.

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 35.8 hours shadowing 16 students for a half day
- a total of 25 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 32 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 in the report was agreed to by visiting committee consensus. Sources of evidence for each conclusion drawn by the visiting committee appear in parenthesis in the Standards sections of the report. The seven Standards for Accreditation reports include commendations and

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

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

School and Community Summary

Arlington High School is located in Arlington Massachusetts, 6 miles northwest of Boston. Bordered by the towns of Belmont, Winchester, and Lexington and the cities of Medford, Somerville and Cambridge, it occupies 5.5 square miles of land. Originally settled in 1635 when a deal was brokered with Squaw Sachem for land rights, the town was originally a small village taking its name from the Algonquian word for "swift running water", Menotomy. This name would be recorded in the history of the American Revolution when, on April 19, 1775, following the more well-known Battle of Lexington and Concord, British soldiers had a second encounter at the Battle of Menotomy. Members of the local militia gathered to ambush the retreating Red Coats, resulting in more than half of the casualties inflicted on both sides. The town of Menotomy became incorporated as West Cambridge in 1807, changing its name from West Cambridge to Arlington sixty years later (1867) to honor the fallen soldiers interned in Arlington National Cemetery.

Since its inception, Arlington has been called home by several notable people who have left a lasting impression themselves on the town and its inhabitants. Living in Arlington during the American Revolution, Samuel Wilson would go on to become one of the most famous icons of the United States, donning the title of "Uncle Sam", the patriotic figure emblazoned on multiple ad campaigns for the US Army stating "I want you". Cyrus Dallin is another notable resident whose impact to the town cannot be denied. With his notable sculptures such as *The Appeal to the Great Spirit*, located at the entrance of the Museum of Fine Arts, and *Paul Revere's Ride*, housed at the Old North Church, his artistic masterpieces have influenced many through the United States. Nowhere is the impact of our residents more tangible in the schools than with the legacy of Moxie, one of the first carbonated soft drinks in the US. Thanks to the legacy of Francis Thompson, former president of the Moxie Company, students of Arlington High school have been receiving scholarships for post-secondary education, funded through the sale of Moxie, ranging from \$20 to \$2,000 since 1939.

Demographically, Arlington has been lacking in diversity, although that has started to change in recent years. During the last census, there were 42,389 people living in the town, self-identifying themselves as 90.97% Caucasian, 4.97% Asian, 1.86% Hispanic or Latino, 1.7% African American and .5% as unidentified. Though English is identified as the primary language in the town, 12% of households in the town identify a non-English primary language. Fortunately, through working with programs such as the Metropolitan Council for Education Opportunity (METCO), and Lutheran Services, our demographics at the high school are slightly more diverse with 82% identifying as Caucasian, 10% as

Asian/Pacific Islander, 5% as African American, and 3% as Hispanic or Latino.

The median income per household is \$64,344. with an unemployment rate of 3%, while the number of families living below the poverty line is 11.1%. This economic diversity is reflected in our school system as well, with a population of 11.1% of our students receiving Free or Reduced Lunch.

Arlington has endeavored to retain the sense of a small town, while bordering major cities. One endeavor has been the focus on residential construction while limiting industrial development and expansion. This results in a majority of our school budget, 83.9%, being generated by local taxes, while 16.1% is generated by state and federal funds. With these funds, the Arlington School District expended \$12,501.68 per student during the 2009 - 2010 academic year, compared with the state average per student expenditure of \$13,063.73. Recently, in a show of support for public education, the town voted a tax override , helping to offset the rising costs in the system. This is the second override of its nature in five years and will last for three years. The town has recently opted to join the Group Insurance Commission (GIC) in an attempt to reduce healthcare expenditures, infusing the system with much needed additional funds.

In addition to Arlington High School, with a population of 1,237 students, the town is also serviced by Minuteman Regional High School for vocational training located in the adjacent town of Lexington. Arlington High School is also home to the LABBB program (Lexington, Arlington, Bedford, Burlington, Belmont), providing educational programming and support services for students with special needs. The Ottoson Middle School services the entire town with a population of 1,029 students in grades 6, 7, and 8. The town also operates seven K - 5 elementary schools: the Brackett, Bishop, Thompson, Hardy, Peirce, Stratton, and Dallin Schools, located throughout the town in various smaller communities, accommodating 3,092 students.

A town sponsored Integrated Preschool for children between the ages of 3 and 5 years old, provide education and support services for children with special needs. The program also includes general education preschool students with a total of 78 students. Within the school district, there are several non-public schools including Arlington Catholic High School with a population of 791, St. Agnes Elementary School, and Ecole Bilingue School. There is also Germaine Lawrence, a residential all girls facility, and Dearborn Academy, a day school for special education students. A nominal amount of residents do send their children to non-public schools, both within and outside of the school district; and a small population of students is homeschooled.

During their career at Arlington High School, students are expected to complete several academic and civic requirements: four years of English, three years of mathematics, three years of science, three years of history/social studies, three years of physical education/health courses, one year of fine arts, two years of a world language and forty hours of community service.

In 2009, Arlington High School streamlined its course levels to reflect the high academic achievement of its student body. Analysis of our statewide testing showed that 90% of students were scoring at the advanced or proficient level in both ELA and math. This prompted the removal of the College 1 Level, moving all former College 1 students into the Advanced Curriculum. Core Curriculum classes are generally tracked, offering three distinct levels: Curriculum A, Curriculum B, and Honors levels. Most students take their core courses at the Curriculum A and Honors levels. Advanced Placement courses are also offered to juniors and seniors in all content areas. Most non-core classes and electives are heterogeneous, although some do offer Honors options. We have recently begun the transition toward offering several core curriculum courses as heterogeneous classes, with plans to expand this program in the coming years. We also removed all prerequisites for classes several years ago, including AP classes, allowing students the freedom to choose their level of academic rigor. In 2011, 239 students completed the Advanced Placement Exams: 25 were awarded as AP scholars, 18 as AP scholars with honor and 16 as AP scholars with distinction.

Our staff of 86 teachers promotes academic rigor and high standards for all students. We maintain a student to teacher ratio of 15:1, and an average class size of 25 students. Our newly created schedule allows for five 52-minute classes and an extended block of 80 minutes, totaling 340 minutes of instructional time per day and 1,000 hours per year (taking into consideration early release days). The extended block was a staff created addition, helping us to schedule every science course with a lab and allowing every class to have an additional 30 minutes once per seven day cycle. We have also implemented a monthly advisory period and homeroom giving students a greater sense of community and belonging through group discussions, team building activities, and mentoring programs. The advisories have also been used to give the student body a more prominent voice in school matters as they discuss substance abuse, mental health awareness and the development of school policy. Adding to this, the student council has created office hours to hear students' concerns, which are then brought before the principal in bi-weekly meetings.

Each of these steps has crafted Arlington High School into an institution capable of having all students access the curriculum, evidenced in our graduation rate of 99.98%, 94.42% of which continue their education in a four-or two-year college. These efforts are mirrored in our significantly low dropout rate of .009%

To aid in the development of our students and enhance our 21st century goals, a district technology plan was developed to update all classrooms in the coming years including wireless access throughout the building, multiple SMARTBoard, projectors, ELMO's, expanding the number of computer labs, a mobile laptop lab, I-touches for classroom use, as well as creating a student email system.

It takes a whole village to raise a child, and Arlington is no exception to this, as we have strived to build strong connections with our community, and they in turn, have extended their efforts on behalf of the students. The Arlington Education Fund, a grant organization, has awarded multiple grants to the high school including financing the purchase of the first SmartBoard for a classroom and the development of a digital photography class. Our parents have become integral members of our community through our School Council, Parent Advisory Council, Friends of Arlington High School Group, various fundraising events, volunteering at various events including Career Day, and our Athletic Organizations (the Touchdown Club). Our senior students have volunteered to be advisors to our freshman students, focusing on transition issues from middle to high school. We have begun to develop a Senior Internship program with various town businesses and offices including law firms, political campaign offices, the police department, and childcare centers, We are fortunate to have a youth counseling center in the town, The Arlington Youth Counseling Center (AYCC), which has built a strong relationship with the school, offers counseling and other supports for a variety of student emotional needs. In addition, we have recently added a School Resource Officer through the Arlington Police Department, giving our students access to their services during the school day.

Our district and our high school are highly committed to providing an appropriate and challenging education to all students. Our annual goals consistently reflect a continuous process of improvement academically, socially and emotionally. We strive to provide a safe and supportive environment that prepares all students for the 21st century. We are always ready to meet the next challenge as evidenced in our current goals of closing the achievement gaps for "at-risk students", supporting academic growth for all students, and preparing for the transition to the Core Curriculum.

Arlington High School

Learning, Connecting and Caring as a Community.

Mission Statement

In an effort to foster academic excellence and personal achievement at the highest levels, Arlington High School focuses on learning, connecting, and caring as a community. AHS provides a safe, supporting, nurturing environment in which students can acquire knowledge, values, and intellectual curiosity that will lead to life-long learning. As a community we have agreed upon the following values and habits of mind as foundational principles that will guide all teaching and learning and policy decisions at Arlington High School. They are:

- Integrity,
- Communication,
- Accountability and responsibility
- Respect.
- Effective teamwork,

We believe that living these values and habits of mind on a daily basis will ensure all students a rigorous high school education that will prepare them for their future roles as learners, leaders, and citizens in a 21st century democracy.

Academic Expectations for Students

1. Gather data and critically evaluate the content, source, and relevance of that data, especially but not exclusively, through the use of technology
2. Reason logically, using appropriate qualitative or quantitative methods and use their analysis to answer questions.
3. Write clearly and effectively.
4. Listen actively and respond through inquiry, discussion, writing, and various forms of art and movement.
5. Read and comprehend varied materials and be able to interpret them
6. Speak clearly and effectively in a variety of contexts
7. Demonstrate citizenship skills and respect for self and others.

21st Century Focus Points

- Higher-order thinking skills through interdisciplinary learning, analysis, and synthesis of information.
- Media literacy
- Math, science, technology, and engineering expertise
- Teamwork in a diverse, multicultural world
- Stress and time management
- Communication skills
- A love of learning coupled with a willingness to work hard

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

CORE VALUES, BELIEFS, AND LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

CURRICULUM

INSTRUCTION

ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT LEARNING

1

Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

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

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

Conclusions

Arlington High School engaged in a dynamic, collaborative, inclusive process over an eight-year period to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs. After the completion of the 2004 NEASC special report, the school community committed to the task of revising the school's mission and vision statement. During the 2004-2005 school year, the entire school read *Good to Great*, by Jim Collins, as a professional development activity. The following school year, the School Improvement Subcommittee (SIS) was created and used *Good to Great* to frame conversations about the direction of the school. The SIS committee led to the formation of the Mission Committee in the 2006-2007 school year. This ad hoc Mission Committee reviewed and revised the school's mission and developed the ICARE values and academic expectations. During the same year, the entire Arlington Public Schools staff read *The World is Flat*, by Thomas Freidman as a professional development activity. As a result of reading this book, teachers, students and parents met in focus groups to discuss and review what 21st century skills were most relevant to Arlington as a community and which should be incorporated into their core values, and beliefs about learning. Reports from these focus groups were shared with all stakeholders and ultimately voted on by students, staff and parents. Their preferences were integrated into the final mission statement developed by the Mission Committee. The basic spirit of the mission and the ICARE values is evident when speaking with students and teachers, observing student behavior, observing instruction, and in the general atmosphere of the school environment. As a result of a long and through process of examining current research, discussing community values, and obtaining input from all stake holders, Arlington High School has a mission statement with relevant core values and beliefs that will guide the work of their students and staff. (teachers, students, self-study)

Arlington High School has identified academic learning expectations that are challenging, measurable, and address academic, civic and social competencies which are defined by a one school-wide holistic rubric. The school has also identified separate 21st century focus areas that cross all disciplines and can be powerfully used to show students connections between individual subjects and classes. Following a school-wide read in 2005 of *Good to Great* by Jim Collins, and a district-wide read in 2006 of *The World is Flat* by Thomas Friedman, faculty members, students, and parents met in a variety of committees to discuss the school's mission, academic learning expectations, and 21st century skills. From these discussions, the school identified and adopted new academic learning expectations and created and adopted seven 21st century focus areas. One holistic rubric exists to measure student progress toward meeting the academic learning expectations, however teachers and students report that this rubric is

rarely used and there was no evidence of the rubric in the student work samples reviewed. Additionally, a checklist rubric exists to measure student adherence to the ICARE principles, but there is no evidence of its use. While the school-wide holistic rubric for the academic expectations is only used sporadically, there is evidence that the expectations are often integrated into instruction and assessments across the curriculum. When the school develops and commits to using school-wide analytic rubrics to further define and measure each individual academic expectation for students, it will be able to establish a means to formally quantify individual student achievement of the 21st century academic expectations (teachers, students, self-study)

Arlington High School's core values, beliefs and 21st century learning expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school and guide the school's policies, procedures, and decision-making practices. The school community is proud of its core values ICARE statement that guides teaching, learning, and policy-making. This is clearly evident and embedded within the culture of the school as demonstrated in interactions with students, teachers, parents and support staff. Students reveal a general familiarity with the ICARE habits of mind and many have internalized these principles. Currently, the advisory period serves as a launching point for the introduction and instruction of ICARE principles. At least once per year in advisory, teachers review the ICARE statement and the habits of mind that form the core of the school's civic and social expectations. Students in the AHS drama classes create skits that bring to life the habits of mind listed in the ICARE statement and present them to 9th grade students to help them see the application of these principals in their daily life at school. Teachers also understand the school's core values and beliefs and many teachers model the ICARE philosophy in daily instruction. Some examples of curricular decisions made in accordance with the core values and expectations in mind include: the math department implementing enhanced sections of Algebra and Geometry with an attached lab to provide additional time to students who need it; the English department rewriting its 9th and 10th grade courses to ensure low-performing students could complete an English course similar to their peers; the history department revising its electives for 11th and 12th grade students to include more AP courses and electives that emphasize 21st century skills; the science department implementing Physical Science as a 9th grade course for all students to ensure that all students are prepared for the MCAS; the world language department writing and receiving a grant which allowed them to implement Mandarin Chinese into the curriculum; and the elimination of the lowest level of courses for students. Other evidence of the impact of these expectations include the guidance department's adoption of Naviance to help students personalize their college and career searches. Students at Arlington High School are benefiting from

decisions made by school staff as a reflection of the newly adopted core values, beliefs and learning expectations. (student interviews, parents interviews, classroom observations)

Arlington High School has started to develop a clearly defined plan to regularly review its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations. The comprehensive plan has not been implemented, however pieces of the plan have been worked on over the course of the last several years. Significant effort from multiple stakeholders has led to the creation of a detailed, researched and prioritized plan which will be utilized as the school community moves forward. Thus far, the principal has brought the core values, beliefs and 21st century learning expectations to the entire faculty and school council for review. In 2012-13 a committee will be formed comprised of students, teachers, parents, support staff, and administrators to meet twice per year with the charge of keeping the core values, beliefs and learning expectations relevant to student needs. The semi-annual meetings will serve to keep current and consistent with changing values, beliefs, and expectations. Professional development time will be provided to ensure that all staff have input in the process. A data review will be conducted annually using standardized test scores and college acceptance rates. The plan must also address student attainment of the 21st century learning expectations. Every four years the principal and school council will bring the core values, beliefs and 21st century learning expectations to the school committee meeting for broadcast to the larger Arlington Community. A formalized comprehensive plan researched and developed by multiple stakeholders will enable Arlington High School to remain consistent with its core values and beliefs and 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, teacher interviews, school leadership)

Commendations

1. The identification of a set of core values (ICARE) that are embodied by the vast majority of students and staff and that positively impacts the culture of the school
2. The dynamic, collaborative and inclusive process by which the school identified and committed to its core values, beliefs and academic expectations
3. The evidence of curricular changes as a result of the core values, beliefs and learning expectations
4. The plan to regularly review and update the 21st century learning expectations with the input of multiple stakeholders
5. The faculty reading of *Good to Great* by Jim Collins to frame conversations about the direction of the school, and the district-wide read in 2006 of *The World is Flat* by Thomas Friedman
6. The extent to which the core values, beliefs about learning, and 21st century learning expectations are embedded into the culture of the school

Recommendations

1. Develop school-wide analytic rubrics for each of the seven school-wide expectations
2. Implement the plan to regularly review and update the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations
3. Ensure that the school-wide rubrics measuring the 21st century learning expectations is being used across all disciplines by all teachers



Curriculum

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

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

Conclusions

Arlington High School's curriculum is purposefully designed to ensure all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations. It is very clear that teachers inherently design curriculum that reflects the AHS learning expectations, however confusion amongst AHS faculty regarding the role of the school's learning expectations and how they connect to the curriculum is apparent. Furthermore, there is no assumed responsibility for learning expectation(s) amongst curriculum areas, rather each area is responsible for all expectations. Decisions regarding teacher professional development, course structure/offerings, the use of technology, and student assignments/assessments within the curriculum have been geared toward the school expectations. Teachers design lesson plans which incorporate AHS learning expectations and some utilize a student-centered approach in order to support the pursuit of achieving the learning expectations. As a result of the purposefully designed curriculum, all Arlington High School students are able to work toward achieving 21st century learning expectations. (curriculum guides, teacher interviews, lesson plans, classroom observations)

Arlington High School is in the process of writing a common curriculum that includes units of studies with essential questions, concepts, content, skills, the school's 21st century learning expectations, instructional strategies and assessment practices that include the use of school-wide analytical rubrics. Through the use of Atlas Rubicon software, academic departments at AHS have been examining and synthesizing existing curricula into one common format per course. Thus far, most of the templates contain essential questions, concepts, skills, and 21st century learning expectations, but instructional strategies, and assessment practices are missing. Establishing curriculum that is comprehensive and follows the same format will ensure that all AHS students have access to engaging curriculum that will help them achieve the 21st century learning expectations. (department heads, self-study, curriculum maps)

The curriculum at Arlington High School emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through inquiry and problem-solving, higher-order thinking, authentic learning opportunities (both in and out of school), and informed/ethical use of technology. The Endicott survey reveals that 78.4 percent of students agree that the content of courses challenge them to think critically and to solve problems. AHS teachers have put a great deal of effort into creating curriculum (across all departments of the school) that moves beyond rote memorizing and restating to applying, analyzing,

evaluating, and creating ideas as an important part of classroom instruction. Although 80.6 percent of students believes the curriculum emphasizes informed and ethical use of technology, cross-disciplinary learning is rare and undocumented in the curriculum. As stated in the self-study, AHS curriculum remains compartmentalized. There are numerous authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school including the 40-hour community service graduation requirement, survival and wilderness camping, the Senior Capstone Project, and the onsite daycare program. Students who are provided an authentic, enriched curriculum that emphasizes depth of understanding and higher-order thinking are better equipped to develop 21st century learning skills. (Endicott survey, lesson plans, classroom observations)

Most Arlington High School taught curriculum is aligned with the written curriculum. In response to the Endicott survey, 67.7 percent of AHS faculty agree or strongly agree that written and taught curricula are aligned. Supervision plays a key role in determining that the written and taught curricula match. In evaluation pre-conferences, teachers and administrators or department heads discuss what will be seen in classrooms and how it fits into the written curriculum. In addition, department heads are in and out of classrooms on an informal basis to observe written curriculum being taught. AHS academic departments are in the process of creating more common assessments with the goal of implementation followed by analysis in order to improve/update curriculum. Common assessments (once reviewed and analyzed) will further support the alignment between written and taught curriculum. Alignment between written and taught curriculum assures all AHS students consistent access to a thoughtfully designed curriculum that promotes higher-order thinking skills, inquiry, and problem-solving. (department meeting agendas & PLC/CLT attendance/log sheets, administration/department heads, Endicott survey)

Limited curricular coordination and vertical articulation exist between and among all academic areas within Arlington High School as well as with the sending school in the district. AHS does not have a clearly identified curriculum review cycle, including time devoted to the development, review, and evaluation of the curriculum. PLCs have been formed with the charge of aligning to the Common Core Standards and creating common assessments, but meeting times are often devoted to other school initiatives, leaving the teachers to rely on informal curricular coordination. Formal time for collaboration is inconsistent within the content areas, limited across content areas, and occurs occasionally with sending schools for the purpose of articulation of the curriculum. Department heads have become the primary means by which AHS departments obtain information regarding curriculum from the sending school in the district (Ottoson Middle School). This connection between the

department heads and the middle school has led to better success at vertical articulation including curriculum changes in order to eliminate repetition in course work between middle and high school courses. Ongoing curricular coordination and vertical articulation prevent redundancies and gaps in the curriculum, and provide opportunities for connection between and among disciplines which lead to enhanced opportunities for student achievement. (teachers, department heads, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum)

Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, and the resources of the library/media center are sufficient to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. According to the current district budget and an AHS student's ability to work toward achieving 21st century learning expectations, staffing levels and class sizes are appropriate. Facilities at AHS are in general disrepair or neglect. The size and number of classrooms is insufficient. The condition of the facilities limits the staff's ability to implement the curriculum. Columns and posts in rooms obstruct student vision and movement. Science labs are not sufficient in size or design for some classes that have larger enrollments. Deficiencies in science laboratory safety and handicap entrance and egress exist in the facility. Science laboratories either have no or limited access to eyewash stations/showers or eyewash stations/showers that have no documentation of current inspection. Gas shutoffs are not located within each room and safety equipment such as fire blankets is missing. Handicap entrance and egress is inadequate for the building, and facilities such as the auditorium and "the pit" are not up to current ADA requirements. Although some teachers/programs have limited access to resources such as appropriate instructional materials, technology, equipment, and supplies, the vast majority of teachers have sufficient resources to implement the curriculum. Almost 75 percent of students agree that AHS provides the necessary instructional materials per course. In addition, students and teachers indicate that the improvements made to the library/media center adequately support implementation of the curriculum including activities and learning opportunities associated with the various co-curricular programs/clubs within the school. Sufficient resources support full implementation of the curriculum and facilitate the ability for students to work toward achieving the 21st century learning expectations. (teachers, students, Endicott survey)

Arlington High School does not provide the school's professional staff with sufficient time and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research. Professional development opportunities and stipended positions for curriculum development are made available during the summer; however, informal collaboration

regarding curriculum is more prevalent. During SY2010-2011 and SY 2011-2012, the majority of formal staff meeting time was devoted to NEASC preparation. Time was also spend on curriculum review and planning, creating formative and summative assessments, and the analysis of students work and assessment data. When the school's professional staff is provided with sufficient time for ongoing collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research, students will benefit from an enriched and consistent curriculum. (staff meeting calendars, teachers, professional development offerings)

Commendations

1. The AHS staff is committed to providing high quality curriculum to all students
2. The work of most academic departments to create a common curriculum format via Atlas Rubicon software
3. Teachers incorporate technology in their curriculum and emphasize informed/ethical use of technology
4. AHS provides multiple authentic learning opportunities through community service, Senior Capstone Project, physical education courses such as Survival and Wilderness Camping, and the onsite day care program
5. Academic departments are working toward creating common assessments to validate the alignment of written and taught curriculum
6. The focus on depth of understanding and application of knowledge

Recommendations

1. Establish additional time for the collaborative and ongoing work necessary to maintain 21st century standards in curriculum
2. Develop strategies for creating more interdisciplinary and cross-curricular communication and course work in the curriculum
3. Include instructional strategies and assessment practices in curriculum maps
4. Ensure that the facility adequately supports the implementation of the curriculum
5. Complete the common curriculum template



Instruction

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

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

Conclusions

Teacher's instructional practices are continuously examined to ensure alignment with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations. Administrators observe classroom teaching and give feedback on strengths and weaknesses utilizing an evaluation instrument. Administrators have been working to adapt the current evaluation tool with the state regulations for all MA educators. The administrator and the teacher engage in dialogue to address weaknesses and deficiencies, and a clear plan is implemented to ensure that the teacher improves instruction to meet the expectations. Most teachers indicated that there is limited time for teachers to engage in peer observations, reflect, and share best practices. Some teachers share instructional practices with peers, but mostly through informal conversations within their own departments. When teachers engage in the evaluation process, reflect on their instructional practices, share with peers and strive to improve instruction aligned with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations, students benefit. (administration, Endicott survey, teacher interview)

Most teachers at AHS engage in a variety of instructional practices which support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Teachers personalize instruction to deepen students' knowledge of core subject matter by encouraging them to pursue their own curriculum-related interests to a topic at hand. Students frequently select their own research topics in English, social studies, and world language classes, and some seniors participate in the Senior Project class in which they take part in a learning experience driven by their personal interests. Most teachers engage students as active and self-directed learners through instructional techniques such as Socratic seminars, literature circles, simulations, and cooperative learning. Most teachers at AHS emphasize inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking. For example, in science classes, students hypothesize, test, and prove or disprove their predictions in lab experiments. Teachers facilitate learning and students frequently analyze documents, synthesize information, and create authentic products. Students apply their understanding of the academic content to the real world in authentic tasks such as using statistical evaluations in math and writing personal memoirs in English. Many teachers integrate technology into their daily instruction. While not all teachers have immediate access to a varied technology, many teachers use technology including but not limited to SmartBoards, Elmo Projectors, Chrome Books, Student Response Clickers, Ipods, Google Docs, Wikispaces, blogs, graphic calculators, and LCD projectors in their instruction to enhance student learning. However, some teachers reported they lack appropriate instructional materials and technology to maintain high levels of student engagement.

Some teachers engage students in self-assessment and reflection. Most teachers encourage students to reflect on their learning by using analytic rubrics prior to submission of an assignment, as well as by using writing folders to track their own areas in need of improvement. Few, if any teachers engage students in formal cross-disciplinary learning, however informal connections between disciplines occur in some classrooms. As a result of the majority of teachers at Arlington High School engaging in a variety of instructional practices, students are engaged in their classes and have multiple opportunities to practice and achieve the 21st century learning expectations. (classroom observation, teacher interview, student work)

Most teachers adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student. Teachers in various departments indicated that they very purposefully organize group learning activities to take advantage of the power of students to teach one another. Some teachers provide activities where less capable students are grouped with stronger students in order to engage, support, and improve the performance of the less capable student. Other teachers review student work and provide opportunities for students to revise in order to improve student learning. Some students reported that when struggling to comprehend the subject matter, teachers utilized different strategies to introduce the content in order to increase their learning. However, most teachers indicated that they prefer students come after school to receive additional academic support. The Learning Center, a program available during school and after school, was implemented to provide additional academic support by teachers and peers. As a result, most Arlington High School students benefit from the adjustment of instructional practice and additional support in order to work toward meeting 21st century learning expectations. (classroom observation, teacher interview, self-study)

Teachers at AHS use student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments. Some teachers have access to MCAS and PSAT scores, and some teachers analyze the data to inform instruction. Most teachers report they individually and informally examine student work, though according to the Endicott survey, only 38 percent of teachers report having formal opportunities to examine student work to improve their instructional practices. Teachers at AHS use feedback from a variety of sources to improve their instructional practices. All teachers receive feedback from administrators through supervision and evaluation, and some teachers receive feedback from students through course and unit evaluations. There is no formal practice in place for teachers to observe their peers and to offer and receive feedback, though some teachers report doing it on their own. Only 8 percent of parents reports that teachers have asked them for feedback about instructional practices, and teachers report that they rarely reach out to parents for feedback on their instruction.

Most teachers engage in professional discourse focused on instructional practice, as seen through the creation of common summative assessments in mathematics, science, history, and English. When a coordinated effort is made to provide time for teachers to collaborate about instruction across the school, AHS will be more able to assure that all students have the opportunity to meet the 21st century learning expectations. (department leaders, teacher interviews, Endicott survey).

Most teachers maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. Teachers at AHS take courses, attend workshops, and go to conferences to maintain expertise in their content areas. Some AHS teachers plan individual goals for professional development by developing Individual Professional Development Plans. AHS teachers earn professional development points on an ongoing basis, and very often share the information and knowledge they learn at department meetings. Teachers have offered mini-courses or workshops to share their individual expertise in their content and in instructional technology with the entire staff. AHS teachers take their responsibility to be experts in their individual subject matter seriously so that they can present the most challenging and rewarding curriculum to their students. As a result of the use of research-based best practices most students at AHS experience instruction which prepares them to achieve 21st century skills. (self-study, department leaders, teacher interview)

Commendations

1. The use of evaluations by administrators to ensure that instructional practices are consistent with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations
2. The variety of strategies used by teachers to personalize instruction
3. The faculty's commitment to high quality instruction that focuses on inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking
4. The engagement of students as active and self-directed learners through a variety of researched-based instructional techniques
5. The implementation of the Learning Center to support student learning
6. The teachers who maximize the use of available technology to enhance student learning
7. The use of assessments data results to inform instructional practices

Recommendations

1. Provide opportunities for all teachers to engage in peer review and to share best practices with teachers throughout the school community
2. Ensure all teachers have equitable access to modern technology and appropriate training to enhance instructional practices
3. Increase opportunities for students to participate in interdisciplinary learning

4. Increase formal opportunities for teachers of common classes to analyze student work to inform instruction
5. Increase opportunities for teachers to review data in order to enhance student learning and improve instruction

4 Assessment of and for Student Learning

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

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

- survey data from current students and alumni.

11. Grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning.

Conclusions

Arlington High School does not yet have a formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. There is evidence, however, that many teachers are incorporating these expectations into their classroom instruction and assessment. Teachers report that they regularly refer to these learning expectations as they create unit assignments. Examples of this practice include: English teachers referring to the expectation that students be able to write clearly and effectively; a drama assignment which required students to listen to performances and to respond with their analysis; and science teachers who reference the gathering, analysis, and application of data in their assessments. Teachers across the school take responsibility for helping their students achieve the learning expectations as those expectations fit into the work they are doing on a daily basis. Some departments have initiated discussions about how well students are meeting the school-wide academic expectations but this discussion has not yet grown to scale throughout the school. The efforts among departments and teachers are inconsistent, and information is not yet formally shared with students or parents. According to the Endicott survey, only 17.7 percent of the school staff reports that they use the school-wide rubrics when assessing student work and in meetings, interviews, and other conversations, students were unclear when asked about school-wide rubrics, indicating that use of the school-wide rubric has not permeated the school. When Arlington High School develops and implements a formal process for consistently applying school-wide rubrics, it will be able to assess whole-school and individual student progress in meeting the school's 21st century expectations. (teachers, student work, Endicott survey, self-study)

Arlington High School's professional staff does not yet have a formal process to communicate individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to students and their families, or the school's progress in meeting these expectations to the school community. The lack of a formalized structure for assessing student progress on the learning expectations hinders the consistent communication of individual progress. The 21st century learning expectations and ICARE values are posted in most classrooms, but there is little consensus among teachers as to how these are evaluated and reported to parents. An exception to this occurs in the special education department in which progress on 21st century learning expectations inclusive of ICARE are evaluated and reported to parents at annual IEP meetings. Some individual teachers are providing feedback to students and parents on students' individual attainment of learning expectations through feedback on individual

assessments and by communicating with parents through individual phone calls or emails or during teacher conferences. In addition, samples of student work from several departments included cover sheets explaining connections to school-wide expectations. School based documents informing students that they are in danger of failing to meet graduation requirements includes references to learning expectations in the checklist. There is evidence of sporadic communication of student's attainment of 21st century learning expectations; however, without formalizing the assessment of these learning expectations school-wide, it is difficult for the students and their families to gain a holistic picture of their progress. AHS school leaders communicate students' overall academic achievement at meetings with the Arlington School Committee. They share such information as the number of students taking and "passing" AP course and associated tests, the number of students who win awards for the art work they submit to the Boston Globe Scholastic Art Awards, and MCAS results for the school. Since the meetings are televised, this information is broadcast to the community at large. While the communication infrastructure exists, and is used for a variety of items of interest, it is difficult to communicate data for which there is no formal process of collection and analysis. Interestingly, 40 percent of families report that the school provides them with "a formal report, in addition to course grades, which explains my son/daughter's progress in achieving the school-wide learning expectations." When AHS develops a formal plan to communicate individual student progress and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations, the school will be able to monitor progress and respond to the needs of individual students and to the needs of the school. (teacher interviews, Endicott survey, student work)

Professional staff in some areas at Arlington High School collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement. Where several teachers teach the same course, such as geometry in the math department or AP US History in the history department, those teachers collaborate on the creation and use of common assessments. The teachers then analyze the data to ensure that classes are moving at the same pace, and that all students taking that course are getting similar rigor and base of knowledge. The science department analyzes MCAS results for questions that less than 40 percent of the students answered correctly, to discover and emphasize topics covered by those questions. Past efforts in this area resulted in the use of double blocks for students struggling with English language arts and math. At the time of the Endicott survey, 32.7 percent of teachers reported that they use data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement. The progress the school is making in this area is commendable despite the insufficient provision of time for teachers to collaborate. Ensuring that all teachers are gathering and analyzing student assessment data

will allow all teachers to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement, and will result in higher student achievement. (teachers, Endicott survey, assessment committee)

Prior to each unit of study, many Arlington High School teachers communicate to students the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed. Teachers consistently indicate a sense of responsibility for student achievement in the 21st century learning expectations. Many teachers mentioned a renewed emphasis on writing across the curriculum since the adoption of the Common Core Standards by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Most examples of student work included analytic rubrics, and indications about which learning expectations were included in the assessment of the assignment, along with unit-related objectives. Students indicated a clear understanding of the expectations for assignments, and the learning expectations they cover. This steady persistence in communicating the applicable 21st century learning expectations for each unit helps to embed these learning expectations into the culture of the school, and gives students opportunities to achieve them. (student work, teachers, student shadowing)

Prior to summative assessments, Arlington High School teachers provide students with the corresponding rubrics for that assessment. Analytic rubrics are the norm for most teachers at AHS, and students seem to expect this as the default grading method in the school. Examples of students' work and sample assessments consistently included rubrics. In interviews, and on the Endicott survey, the majority of teachers and students indicated that rubrics were provided for assignments. As a result of the consistent use of rubrics, students have a clear understanding about how they will be assessed on their work, and can approach that work with confidence. (student work, sample assessments, Endicott survey)

In each unit of study, Arlington High School teachers consistently employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments. Student work and interviews with teachers and students indicated that a wide variety of assessment strategies are used across the school and within courses. AHS teachers use quizzes, homework, presentations, research papers, Google sites, student-created newspapers and tests as assessment tools. Formative and summative strategies included conferencing, co-operative learning activities, exit tickets, KWLs and "I Learned" statements, journals, learning logs, problem-solving activities, response groups, self-evaluation, and student response systems (clickers.) The use of this range of assessment strategies allows students to demonstrate their knowledge in a variety of ways, resulting in high achievement and in developing self-confidence. (student work, self-study, sample assessments)

Teachers in some areas collaborate in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments. The school occasionally provides designated, formal time for teachers and department heads to collaborate about assessment practices. For example, several departments, including mathematics, science, and history have devoted, and continue to devote, professional meeting time to develop common course assessments, and the English department staff has collaboratively developed common assessments in grades 9, 10, and 11. Staff in the English, mathematics, and science departments reviews the MCAS summative assessments the English department reviews PSAT data, and the mathematics and history departments review AP exams to inform modifications in both formative and summative assessments. However, only informal attention is paid to common course assessments. For example, English department teachers have sporadically collaborated to assess student work on common assessments. The school-wide analytic rubrics are rarely used to assess student work, and thus do not inform analysis and/or revision of assessments. The lack of consistent time for teachers to formally collaborate to create, analyze, and revise formative and summative assessments limits the ability of the school to identify and address student needs. (teacher interviews, department heads, Endicott survey)

Teachers across the school provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work. English teachers often provide formative feedback on student writing and provide opportunities for students to revise their work prior to submitting it for summative assessment. Likewise, visual arts teachers provide students with feedback for immediate revision while completing assignments. ELL and basic literacy students receive extensive and timely feedback targeting student improvement. Students report that their teachers routinely provide feedback after summative assessments prior to beginning a new unit of study. Specific, timely, and corrective feedback ensures that students are empowered to revise and improve their work. (student work, teacher interview, students)

Teachers pervasively use formative assessments to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning. The mathematics and English departments use diagnostic assessments early in the year to develop and refine instructional strategies. Teachers across the school use formative assessments during lessons to ensure student understanding: “student response systems,” “exit slips,” teacher-student conferencing, and cooperative learning activities were evident in classroom observations and reported by both teachers and students. Teachers across the school use the

results of these activities and formative assessments to inform necessary changes in instruction.

Teachers' pervasive analysis of data from formative assessments to determine appropriate, necessary changes in instructional practice leads to improvements in student learning. (classroom observations, self-study, teacher interview)

Teachers and administrators, often individually, and in some areas collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice. Teachers across the school individually examine evidence of student learning including student work, common course and grade-level assessments, and standardized assessments, to revise curriculum and improve instructional practice. However, only in some areas do teachers collaboratively do so. For example, English teachers occasionally collaborate to examine student learning as demonstrated in MCAS, diagnostic grammar assessments, and common course assessments. Likewise, the mathematics department is developing formal processes to review PSAT, SAT, MCAS, diagnostic assessments, and data from sending schools; the visual arts department occasionally collaborates to share and review student work; the science department occasionally reviews MCAS results; and the history/social science department often reviews AP exam results. In all cases, analysis informs revisions and improvements in curriculum and instructional practices. Administrators often individually examine evidence of student learning to inform revisions in instruction and curriculum. Two examples are "ACCESS for ELLs" and "Scantron Performance Series Web-Based Diagnostics" in math and English language arts, both used to inform instructional practices and curriculum for specific student sub-groups. Department heads examine a range of evidence of student learning, including those referenced above relative to teachers. However, only 58.2 percent of staff agrees that "teachers and administrators examine a variety and range of student work... to revise and improve curriculum and instructional practices." Teachers in some areas report that student learning data is infrequently shared with them. While individual examination of a range of evidence of student learning by teachers and administrators leads to informed improvement of curriculum and instructional practices, the lack of regular, formal collaboration, including increased sharing and dissemination of data by administration to teachers, hinders revision of curriculum and instructional practices in order to enhance student learning. (teacher interview, department heads, Endicott survey)

Grading and reporting practices are rarely reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. The professional staff infrequently reviews and discusses school grading policies in light of the school's core values and beliefs about learning. Only limited procedures, such as occasional comparisons of grading histories of teachers across common courses,

attempt to ensure that grading practices are consistent across all subject areas and by all teachers. Some department heads and teachers report consulting the school's core values when designing assessments, but not in more global discussions around grading and reporting practices. In fact, only 58.8 percent of staff agrees "school-wide grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised," and only 56.6 percent of parents agrees that "teachers' grading practices are aligned with the school's beliefs about learning." While sporadic efforts have been made to revise reporting practices to align with the school's core values and beliefs about learning, such as a 2008 draft "Habits of Mind Mid-Year Report," no such revision has been implemented. "When grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about student learning, Arlington High School will ensure equity among grading practices and student experiences." (teachers, school leadership, Endicott survey)

Commendations

1. The wide variety of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments, in order to revise and improve curriculum and instruction used by teachers
2. The specific, timely, and corrective feedback given by teachers to ensure students revise and improve their work
3. The practice of providing rubrics to students prior to each summative assessment
4. The common course assessments developed by several departments during professional meeting time
5. The pervasive use formative assessments by teachers to inform and adapt instruction
6. The communication of the applicable school-wide learning expectations to students prior to each unit of study

Recommendations

1. Provide sufficient formal time for teachers to collaborate in the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments
2. Develop and implement a formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess whole-school and individual students progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
3. Develop and implement a mechanism to communicate individual and whole-school progress on the school's 21st century learning expectations to all stakeholders
4. Formalize and implement school-wide the process of collecting, disaggregating, and analyzing data to identify and respond to potential inequities in student achievement

5. Ensure that grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

SUPPORT STANDARDS

SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING



School Culture and Leadership

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

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

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

Conclusions

The Arlington High School community provides a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for the vast majority of its students. The core values as embodied in the ICARE acronym are evident in student behavior in the hallways, classrooms and alternative programs at AHS. The school offers a range of athletic and interest activities that foster a sense of belonging and pride for most students. These activities represent a broad range of student interests from GSA to Best Buddies. There are also myriad leadership and community service opportunities. Students feel safe and have experienced little, if any, bullying, hazing or intentional racial disrespect. Administration deals with issues of disrespect and bullying in an effective and timely manner in most cases. Specific minority populations are less invested in the school community and perceive lesser degree of acceptance and respect. Certain populations do not demonstrate the same level of academic and social success as peers in the majority population. Students are proud to be members of the AHS community and exhibit behaviors consistent with the school's core values. (students, parents, faculty interviews)

Although not every student at AHS is enrolled in at least one heterogeneously grouped class, AHS has made significant strides in ensuring that every student has access to heterogeneously grouped classes in core and elective course areas. The move toward academic equity and inclusivity began in the 2003-2004 school year when the Arlington School Committee removed all grade-based pre-requisites as a criterion for keeping students from enrolling in a particular course. Up until that time, students could only enroll in Honors courses with an A or A- in the previous course and with a teacher recommendation. Although a protracted process is still in place for lower-level students to enroll in AP classes, these classes are made available to the AHS student community on the whole. As a result, AHS students have access to more challenging curricula and can become productive members of an equitable and inclusive classroom focused on high expectations. (students' schedules, course catalog, student interviews)

Most students at Arlington High School participate in the advisory program and advisors work to form positive relationships with students, but advisory meetings are too infrequent. The infrequency of advisory meetings (there are only seven meetings scheduled for the 2012-2013 school year) makes it difficult for advisors and students to form strong relationships in a formal setting. According to a school-wide advisory memorandum, advisory meeting topics are timely and relate to current school

topics and issues. The lack of clarity regarding the school-wide 21st century learning expectations and rubrics that assess them, serves as an impediment to advisors assisting students with meeting these expectations. School-wide social and civic issues are highlighted and strengthened, but a lack of regular advisory meetings impacts culture and connections between adults and students. (advisory schedule, teacher interviews, PowerSchool)

The district and school leadership teams provide some formal time for the professional staff to improve their practice; however, that time is not always used effectively. Most staff and professional development time was spent on the NEASC self-study. There is little evidence that available time was used to engage in meaningful conversations about the core beliefs of the school and how to align practices with the school's beliefs. While some departments make effective use of professional development time, the available time needs to be used effectively across all departments. When AHS uses their professional development time effectively, curriculum, instruction, and assessment will offer an opportunity for improved student achievement. (teacher interviews, Endicott survey, self-study)

AHS leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning. There is evidence that school administration is dedicated to implementing the new evaluation standards that will benefit all students at AHS. Members of the leadership team participate in professional development directly related to the use of the new evaluation tool as it relates to increased student success. The leadership team also uses various research-based models to evaluate and supervise the faculty. By focusing on the learning needs of all students, administrators are working to ensure that they will experience increased success and investment in the learning process. (administrators, self-study, updated PD documentation)

The organization of time at AHS does not support research-based instruction or professional collaboration. The master schedule at AHS includes a rotating schedule with five 51 minute periods and one 84 minute period for each major subject per seven-day rotation. The schedule is developed to accommodate a traditional use of instructional time, leaving teachers with some limited opportunity to develop lesson plans that utilize extended learning blocks. There is time for departments to address curriculum development, reviewing student work, and developing common assessments. The schedule does not support collaboration between and among teachers, leaving them dependent upon contractual department meeting and professional development time beyond the school day for professional conversations. The schedule and organization of time for instruction at AHS must allow for greater use of research-based best practices and professional collaboration to maximize students' ability to meet the learning expectations. (student shadowing, lesson plans, self-study)

Student load and class size, with the exception of science labs and art rooms, enable AHS teachers to meet the learning needs of the majority of students. In the past year since the self-study was completed, class size has been moderated to allow teachers to better meet the needs of their students. Teachers who reported class sizes approaching or exceeding 30 are now reporting more reasonable teaching loads. However, overcrowding still exists in isolated settings including science labs and some visual arts studios. Overcrowding in settings with lab and studio equipment presents significant safety issues as well as diminishing effective instruction and attention to the needs of individual students. Appropriate class sizes in all classes will help ensure that students are able to meet the school's expectations. (teacher interviews, self-study, observations)

The AHS principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The majority of faculty members feel that the principal and other school-based leaders provide leadership consistent with the school's core values and beliefs. Veteran teachers commented extensively that the AHS principal enforces high expectations and behaviors consistent with the core values and beliefs. Willingness to take a "firm stand" and to make hard decisions were comments made by teachers related to the AHS principal's leadership methods. The principal has been an outspoken advocate for the school's advisory program and has sent bulletins and memos to staff and parents focusing on the importance of high standards in both academic and social behavior. Some teachers, however, felt that the principal was not always visible last year and that communication of expectations could have been more effective and timely. These same teachers also commented that these traits have improved during this current school year and that the principal does model high expectations aligned with the school's core values. The principal's instructional leadership is rooted in the school's core values, and beliefs about learning assisting students in achieving the learning expectations. (teacher interviews, administrator interviews, Endicott survey)

AHS teachers, students, and parents have the opportunity to be involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership. While only 28.1 percent of students felt they had input in important decisions made at school, evidence suggests that opportunities are available to students who choose to become involved. A school council has been created and approves the School Improvement plan and has input on the school budget. Parent interviews suggested that parents do feel invested in the decision-making process while the Endicott survey shows that less than half of parents actually feel that they have opportunities to be involved in

important decisions made at the school. Administrators also mentioned in interviews that they have an open door policy with regards to parent decision-making and concerns. During parent interviews, several parents voiced agreement with this statement. Increasing involvement of teachers, parents, and students in school decision-making will lead to greater proprietorship on the part of the school community. (teacher interviews, students, parents, Endicott survey)

AHS teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. AHS teachers have been involved in the change process and have created a number of clubs and activities, including the Spanish Fiesta Tour, the Nagaokakyo Exchange Program, Club Day, and a peer mediation group. Additionally, events such as a mental health awareness day, a multicultural day and talent show, and the SAVE Club Environmental Awareness Week were organized by various faculty and staff members. Furthermore, AHS teachers have created a faculty senate to address school improvement issues teachers feel should be brought before the administration. Teacher initiatives positively impact school culture and students' engagement in learning. (Standard committee, faculty senate structure memorandum, interviews)

The Arlington School Committee, superintendent, and AHS principal work collaboratively, reflectively, and constructively to assist students in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. The principal presents school-related documents to the superintendent and school committee in open and public meetings. School committee members review these documents to ascertain whether academic expectations and district goals have been considered. Additionally, when difficult district budget cuts have been made over the past few years, the guiding principle for such decisions was how best might the district and high school administration safeguard its mission of furthering high 21st century expectations for all students. To this end, the Arlington School Committee approved a set of district goals that speak their commitment to increased academic achievement in core areas expanding technology, expanding communications systems, supporting professional development initiatives focused on 21st century skills, and supporting the work of Collaborative Learning Teams (CLTs). As a result of collaboration, students are supported as they work towards embodying the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, district memorandum, administrators interviews)

The Arlington Public School Committee and the superintendent have delegated authority to the interim principal to enable her to lead the high school. There is nothing officially stated in the district policy and procedures manual that specifically delineates the decision-making authority granted to the principal by the school committee and the superintendent. The district policies and procedures do,

however, instruct the superintendent to establish clear understandings with personnel of their working relationship and expectations, and grant the superintendent the authority to refer matters requiring certain actions to the appropriate personnel. Part I, Title XII, Chapter 71, Section 59B of the Arlington general laws, deals with principals, their appointment, compensation, and duties. The superintendent, principal, and assistant principal also reported having a good working relationship and an open door policy that is further reinforced by high school and district offices located in the same building. Strong administrative delegation of authority at the district level results in a robust high school leadership that supports school culture and 21st century education. (district policies and procedures, Arlington general laws, administration interviews)

Commendations

1. The existence of a positive school culture, which makes AHS a safe and welcoming place for students and staff
2. The impressive array of extra-curricular clubs and organizations, funded by the district, available to the student population
3. The exceptional demeanor and deportment of students in the school indicating a respectful and supportive school culture
4. The strong communication and collaboration between the school committee, superintendent, and principal
5. The principal's instructional leadership and advocacy for the school's core values and beliefs about learning and the programs that support them
6. The dedication by administrators to research-based supervision and evaluation that is focused on the improvement of teaching and learning
7. The hiring of new faculty members that has resulted in more manageable classes sizes
8. The AHS faculty's initiative in creating a number of one-time or short-term events that foster student involvement, such as after-school activities, international exchange programs, and community service opportunities that fosters student involvement
9. The lack of barriers to general student enrollment in core and elective courses
10. The school developing advisory program which ensures that all students have at least one adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well, and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
11. The leadership and initiative demonstrated by teachers essential to the improvement of the school

Recommendations

1. Ensure that research-based instructional strategies and teacher collaboration are supported by the school schedule
2. Ensure that every student over the course of their high school experience is enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core class (English/language arts, social studies, math, science, or world language)
3. Involve teachers in the identification of professional development focused on the improvement of student learning and success
4. Ensure that the school's 21st century learning expectations are an integral part of the advisory program agendas
5. Develop and implement a plan to address overcrowding in classroom settings in which the use of lab and studio equipment presents potential safety hazards
6. Implement strategies to ensure that students, teachers, and parents take advantage of opportunities to participate in the decision-making process



School Resources for Learning

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

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

century learning expectations.

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

Conclusions

Arlington High School has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, which support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Students are assigned to a guidance counselor and a dean, both of whom provide primary support services. According to results from the Endicott survey, 83 percent of students say that they know who to ask for help at school if they have a problem. Also, all students meet on a regular basis with an advisor in groups of 15 to 20 students. The Student Support Team (SST) meets to discuss students believed to be at-risk academically, socially, or emotionally, and provide interventions such as substance abuse evaluations, stress reduction/anger management groups, and therapeutic counseling. The Learning Center, staffed by licensed teachers, provides remedial and tutorial services to students who struggle academically. The Transitional Program offers coordinated, short-term support for students returning to school after extended absences. The high school developed the Workplace Alternative Program as an intervention for students needing a non-traditional educational program. Programming in conjunction with Germaine Lawrence, Inc. and the Arlington Youth Counseling Collaborative extend the targeted services available to students. Because AHS provides a wide range of educational support services, the vast majority of students are able to progress academically toward meeting the school's 21st century learning expectations. (Endicott survey, students, teacher interviews)

AHS provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services. Seventy-five percent of parents who responded to the Endicott survey reported that AHS provided information about student support services. Staff members, including guidance counselors, nurse, homeless liaison, school resource officer, social workers, special education staff, and general education teachers communicate with families in many ways. They provide information in person and in print and web-based formats including the AHS website, Arlington Public Schools Physical and Mental Health Resource Booklet, and information nights for parents and guardians. As a result, families receive the information needed to support their children academically, socially, and emotionally. (Endicott survey, teacher interviews, self-study)

The AHS support staff use technology in an effective manner to deliver a wide range of services. Students and parents make use of the online portal that is part of the PowerSchool data information system used by AHS. The portal allows monitoring of students' grades and attendance. Another use of technology is the web-based Naviance college and career platform that guidance counselors use for managing the college application process for students, who begin accessing the suite of programs

starting in grade 9 to establish a clear path to post-secondary education. Also, the guidance department sends a monthly electronic newsletter to families, informing them about upcoming guidance and school-wide events as well as reminding the community about the resources and support provided by the guidance department. The school nurse currently uses SNAP Health Center software to maintain electronic health records. The nurse uses this information to communicate with parents, and when appropriate, staff. Because support services staff use technology for information management, services are coordinated so students are able to progress academically toward meeting the school's 21st century learning expectations. (school board, teacher interviews, students)

Arlington High School's counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff. AHS has five guidance counselors, one school-wide social worker/intervention specialist, and three additional social workers who work specifically with students with disabilities who have individualized education programs requiring direct services or consults. The guidance department has published a written developmental curriculum for all four grades. Guidance counselors are available to meet with grade 9 and 10 students at least twice per year to discuss scheduling, course levels, and academic planning. They meet with grade 11 and 12 students individually and in small groups on a more frequent basis for college counseling and other post-secondary planning. Each student has the option to make an appointment to meet with their guidance counselor during the student's free time. Results from the Endicott survey reveal that 66 percent of students feels comfortable going to the guidance counselor. Personnel have also created relationships with community agencies that respond to student needs. Results from formal evaluations, norm-referenced testing, and qualitative screenings are examples of assessment data used to enhance services AHS provides. Because of the depth and breadth of counseling services and the holistic approach to student well-being, AHS students across the school have access to appropriate services that support them working toward achieving 21st century learning expectations. (Endicott survey, parents, self-study)

Arlington High School's health services have an adequate number of certified personnel who provide preventative health services for students at Arlington High School. AHS has one full-time nurse and the district's nursing supervisor is housed in the AHS health office. The nurse provides both preventative and direct intervention services, uses an appropriate referral process, conducts ongoing student health assessments, and collects relevant assessment data that allows AHS to assess which services are needed for students to meet the school's 21st century learning expectations. The nurse reviews students' physical exam reports and immunization records, and she is notified when a student is involved in a concussion incident. As a result of the collection and analysis of many health-related

data points, the nurse makes decisions on health bulletins and other information sent to parents or posted on the nurse's website. At the beginning of every academic year, the nurse instructs staff on universal precautions, life-threatening allergies, and other pertinent health issues. Due to the adequate amount of nursing personnel, the school is able to provide the safe environment necessary for all students to work toward achieving 21st century learning expectations. (central office personnel, students, Endicott survey)

By design, library services are an integral part of the Arlington High School learning community. The school has a full-time librarian again after the position was cut due to budget constraints during the 2010-2011 school year. The librarian spends most of her time developing and implementing the School Library Media Program while the remainder is spent working on media and technology for the district. The librarian is actively engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum, and provides a wide range of materials, technology, and other information services in support of the school curriculum. The librarian attends department head meetings led by the assistant superintendent in order to be aware of departmental issues and topics throughout the district. Participating in these meetings allows the librarian to plan acquisitions based on department needs. In collaborating with teachers, the librarian ensures that available resources reinforce the school's curriculum. The library provides a wide range of materials, technologies and other information services in support of the school's curriculum. The library is open Monday through Thursday from 7:45 AM to 4:00 PM.; on Friday it closes at 3:00 PM. These hours include times before and after classes to increase access for students. The library accommodates class groups on a flexible schedule. The librarian tracks usage of the school's databases and uses the information to make decisions about future subscriptions. She also weeds the collection to ensure that materials are current and support the curriculum. Because the librarian is involved in curriculum implementation through collaboration, materials acquisition, and technology use, AHS students are able to work toward meeting the 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, teachers, central office personnel)

For most identified students, AHS has an adequate number of staff, who collaborates with colleagues, provides inclusive learning opportunities for all students, and performs ongoing assessment using relevant data. The school has 24 licensed personnel and teaching assistants providing a wide range of programs and services. All AHS students have inclusive learning opportunities in general education classes and co-curricular activities. Special education staff is implementing the Social Thinking curriculum by Michelle Garcia Winner in order to increase the social pragmatic skills of students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. AHS uses Scantron® Performance Series® Web-Based Diagnostics in

math and language arts to assess student progress with literacy skills. However, AHS is unable to obtain relevant data for ELL students due to the scarcity of assessment materials in students' native languages. AHS does have a Spanish-language version of the Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC), yet does not currently have a licensed staff member with the language proficiency to administer it. With the discontinuation of MELA-O and MEPA assessments, the ELL program will administer ACCESS for ELL students. All counselors, special education teachers, and academic support teachers communicate face-to-face, via email, or through personal electronic device applications with students' general education teachers and related staff. The level of collaboration, use of data, and fostering of inclusion experiences support most AHS students working toward meeting the 21st century learning expectations. (panel presentation, teacher interviews, self-study)

Commendations

1. The comprehensive array of academic, social, and emotional support programs and services available to assist students in meeting 21st century expectations
2. The variety of methods used to ensure that families, especially those most in need, are provide with information about student support services
3. The use of technology to deliver a wide-range of student support services
4. The guidance department provides comprehensive student support information on the AHS website AHS has developed and published a Guidance Department Curriculum Guide
5. The school nurses who use a website, appropriate referrals, and membership on school-based teams to provide preventative health and directive intervention services to students
6. The collaboration among support staff, special educators, and general educators across the school
7. The connections fostered by AHS with community social service and health agencies
8. The active role of the librarian in supporting the curriculum

Recommendations

1. Assure the availability of language appropriate materials for assessing and placing ELL students
2. Ensure that appropriate licensed staff member are available to administer assessments to students with ELL needs



Community Resources for Learning

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

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

Conclusions

The community and the district's governing body has worked hard to provide funding for ongoing professional development and curriculum revision, professional and support staff, and many of the school programs and services. Budget increases have been consumed by the rising costs of health care and out-of-district placement costs resulting in cuts to professional staff. According to the Endicott Survey, only 10 percent of parents indicated that the community provide dependable funding for programs and services. In response, the budget has been supplemented by grants and community donations. The FY12 school committee budget, supplemented by a one million dollar override, provides adequate funding to support the programs, staffing, professional development, and curriculum revisions of the school. Most teachers report that they have adequate supplies and materials for instruction. Equipment in some classes is outdated and in need of replacement. The loss of the 3rd house dean has placed additional strain on the administrative team. Technology funds are not fully allocated in the budget; instead some funds are provided as they are available through cost savings in other budget areas and through grants. Teachers and students report a significant number of students involved in co-curricular activities despite having user fees for participation. The funding provided by the community and the district's governing body for ongoing professional development and curriculum revision, professional and support staff, and many of the school programs and services although often coming from grants and fundraising allow students to work toward achieving the learning expectations set forward by the school community (school committee, self-study, teachers)

Arlington High School does not sufficiently plan or adequately fund programs to ensure maintenance and repair of the building and school plant, to properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment, and to keep the school clean on a daily basis. The school building shows significant signs of wear and a general need for greater maintenance of essential facilities. Bathrooms have a general lack of cleanliness and do not all have functioning soap dispensers, working faucets, and stalls. Many lockers are rusted and broken and locker rooms have peeling paint. There is one classroom that is closed to students due to environmental concerns. During the visit ceiling tiles were seen falling in the building. Funding for repairs is limited to critical incidents, with additional projects being addressed through budget savings in other areas. The school has a Director of Facilities and Maintenance who oversees a custodial manager and a maintenance manager. There are 5 maintenance workers and 12 custodians who deal with all aspects of the facility. Despite the number of on-duty custodians building and cleaning requirements are not being met. Some hallways and many classrooms are dusty and vents in

many areas have visible signs of dust and lint in them. Basic classroom equipment such as faucets, desks, tables, and lab supplies are worn, broken, or not up to current standards of use. The Technology Plan does not show a cycle for replacement of equipment in order to maintain an adequate level of service. Acceptable levels of cleanliness and repair must be provided to ensure that the building allows students to meet the learning expectations. (school support staff, facility tour, self-study)

The community adequately funds some programs and services and plans for enrollment changes and staffing needs, however, funding for long range technology planning and capital improvement is limited. Funding for technology purchases come from town and school funds, as well as from grants and Arlington Education Foundation (AEF) funds .Community support through the budget override and fundraising has allowed the school to meet current enrollment and staffing needs. Special education funding has increased over the past year and more out-of-district placements have been brought back into the school. While the high school has a technology plan for technology acquisition, much of the funding for current purchases comes from AEF and grants. Installation of a wireless network at school was made possible through cost savings in the budget. The community has not funded nor created a plan to address deficiencies in the facility. Once the school and community plans for and provided funds to support long-range planning of programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements students will be better prepared for 21st century learning. (self-study, central office personnel, school committee)

In some areas, faculty and building administrators are involved in the development and implementation of the budget. Some teachers report being part of the budget process through their department chair, while some report that they are not consulted on budgeting needs and, therefore, look to outside funding for educational opportunities and supplies. Inequity in funding exists in departments that do not have strong advocates for funding or departmental leadership that pursues grant opportunities. Programs such as ELL, special education, and English report the need for additional supplies and materials not included in budget discussions. Building administrators, as part of the Leadership Team, are involved with budget development and revisions. The Parent Advisory Council participates in decisions about budget cuts and revisions. Funding inequities exist among departments and therefore some students do not have access to materials in all classes necessary for them to meet the 21st century learning expectations. (teachers, self-study, school support staff).

Arlington High School is a complex of three buildings. The space for programs and services is crowded and show signs of age, wear, and inadequate maintenance. There is insufficient classroom and lab

space to support the curriculum. Quality instruction is being delivered by teachers in spite of the impediments of a crowded and deteriorating building. Although students and teachers have pride in the programs at AHS, the advanced age of the building shows significant signs of wear and tear. Science labs are not sufficient in size or design for some classes that have larger enrollments. Columns and posts in rooms obstruct student vision and movement. Media center renovations have created a space for student collaboration and the use of technology and the facility is used extensively before, during and after school. The school has significant gym and workout space with a variety of programs available. Classrooms are insufficient in number and size especially in science and art classrooms, where class size exceeds the number of available stations in some classrooms. Students are able to achieve educational goals and objectives in spite of a facility with significant needs. (facility tour, classroom observations, teachers).

The school does not fully maintain documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are not in full compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. Deficiencies in science laboratory safety, handicap entrance and egress, and fire drill procedures exist as a part of the physical plant. Science laboratories either have no or limited access to eyewash stations/showers or eyewash stations/showers that have no documentation of inspection. Gas shutoffs are not located within each room and safety equipment such as fire blankets is missing. Handicap entrance and egress is inadequate for the building, and facilities such as the auditorium and "the pit" are not up to current ADA requirements. Postings of fire drill procedures are not evident in every classroom or common spaces such as cafeteria, media center, and the "old hall." Student and staff safety and security is compromised which affects students' ability to achieve the school's learning expectations. (facility tour, classroom observations, teachers).

The professional staff engages parents and families as partners in each student's education and in some areas, reaching out specifically to those families who have been less connected with the school. Arlington High School provides a personalized education experience to parents and families. The faculty and staff inform parents and families through orientation days, guidance nights, back-to-school nights, and parent conferences. Families of students who are deemed at-risk of not meeting the school's academic or social expectations are invited to individual meetings with the school deans and/or guidance counselors. The school uses a range of technology to communicate with parents and families electronically. The website has practical and important information for all aspects of school including health and safety information, academic departments, athletics, and guidance. The school

principal writes regular emails to the parents about school activities and the guidance office also sends out regular communications about issues related to guidance, the college admissions process, mental health support, and other important topics. PowerSchool, the school's student information system (SIS), provides a student and parent portal to allow families to see student academic progress and attendance. The METCO coordinator holds monthly meetings in Boston for parents of those students who are bussed from Boston neighborhoods to AHS, to keep those families informed. Critical documents, such as report cards and important information, are not translated into multiple languages as needed. Most families have adequate contact with the school community, yet populations of students without regular access to technology or with language barriers still have limited opportunities to communicate with professional staff which impacts their ability to achieve 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, teachers, school support staff).

The school develops parent and community partnerships, however, business and higher education partnerships are limited. Arlington High School has supportive families and an at-large community that has helped deal with difficult funding situations. Funding to support programming, personnel, and supplies necessary to implement 21st century curriculum and instruction, have come through community fundraising, outside grants, and income generating programs. Budget overrides were passed by the town's citizens, resulting in a balanced FY12 budget, increased staffing, and decreased athletic fees. Although opportunities for the school to develop partnerships with local businesses and higher educational institutions exist they are limited. The school has student-teaching partnerships with Boston College, Brandeis University, and Framingham State College. On-line courses are available to students from Framingham State College and dual enrollment courses are available from the Harvard Extension School and Middlesex Community College. A partnership with MIT/Lincoln Labs allowed the school to create a robotics team. Student learning is enhanced by the financial contributions of community organizations, however greater business and higher-education partnerships will enhance learning opportunities for students. (parents, school committee, self-study).

Commendations

1. The community which raises funds to support programs and services
2. The pride exhibited by students and the community in the high school and its programs despite the age and condition of the building
3. The media center renovation which provides students with the opportunity to achieve 21st century learning objectives
4. The efforts of school staff to actively engage parents and families as partners in each student's education

Recommendation

1. Develop and implement a long-range plan, with a timeline for completion and a source of funding, to completely address school facility needs
2. Address overcrowding in classroom settings in which the use of lab and studio equipment presents potential safety hazards
3. Addressed all health and safety issues including science labs, egress plans for evacuation, and handicap accessibility
4. Develop a budget that provides dependable revenue without reliance on grants and fundraising to consistently support programs
5. Develop funding plans for long-range planning, technology, and capital improvements
6. Develop and implement a plan to improve the overall cleanliness of the facility
7. Increase partnerships with area colleges to provide students with additional opportunities
8. Ensure that the families of all students are receiving report cards and other school communications regardless of Internet access and/or language barriers
9. Ensure that all teachers and building administrators are part of the budget development process
10. Ensure equitable distribution of school resources to support learning

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

This comprehensive evaluation report reflects the findings of the school's self-study and those of the visiting committee. It provides a blueprint for the faculty, administration, and other officials to use to improve the quality of programs and services for the students in Arlington 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 Committee requires that the evaluation report be made public in accordance with the Committee's Policy on Distribution, Use, and Scope of the Visiting Committee Report.

A school's continued accreditation is based on satisfactory progress implementing valid recommendations of the visiting committee and others identified by the Committee 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 Committee requires that the principal of Arlington 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 Committee 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 Committee may request additional Special Progress Reports if one or more of the Standards are not being met in a satisfactory manner or if additional information is needed on matters relating to evaluation report recommendations or substantive changes in the school.

To ensure that it has current information about the school, the Committee has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Committee within sixty days (60) of occurrence any substantive change which negatively impacts on the school's adherence to the Committee's Standards for Accreditation. The report of substantive change must describe the change itself and detail any impact which the change has had on the school's ability to meet the Standards for Accreditation. The Committee's Substantive Change Policy is included in the

Appendix on page 62. 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 Committee office has current statistical data on the school.

The Committee 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 Committee's *Accreditation Handbook* which was given to the school at the onset of the self-study. Additional direction regarding suggested procedures and reporting requirements is provided at Follow-Up Seminars offered by Committee staff following the on-site visit.

The committee would like to thank the people of Arlington, the school district, and the staff and students at AHS for their hospitality during the visit.

APPENDIX A

**Arlington High School
NEASC Accreditation Visit
December 2nd to 5th 2012**

Visiting Committee

<p>Chair Timothy J. Sullivan Jr. Capital Region Education Council Hartford, CT 06106</p> <p>Assistant Chair Ira Brown New England Association of Schools and Colleges Norton, MA 02766</p> <p>Carolann Tebbetts Milford High School Milford, MA, 01757</p> <p>Ryan Beattie Scituate High School Scituate, MA 02066</p> <p>Paul De Palo Shrewsbury High School Shrewsbury, MA 01545</p> <p>Marguerite Ferrer Milford High School Milford, NH 03055</p> <p>Jonathan Bennett Harwich High School Harwich, MA 02645</p> <p>Mary Jane Quinlan Beverly High School Beverly, MA 01915</p>	<p>Lori Solazzo Newburyport High School Newburyport, MA 01950</p> <p>Joan Holt Oliver Ames High School North Easton, MA 02356</p> <p>Susan Densmore Triton Regional High School Byfield, MA 01922</p> <p>Steven Dellinger-Pate Pathways to Technology & Design Windsor, CT 06095</p> <p>Brian Regan Hudson High School Hudson, MA 01749</p> <p>Jeff Gallo Danvers High School Danvers, MA 01923</p> <p>Stephen Gould Shepard Hill Regional High School Dudley, MA 01571</p> <p>Elizabeth Dawes Marblehead High School Marblehead, MA 01945</p>
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APPENDIX B

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

Committee on Public Secondary Schools

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

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

- elimination of fine arts, practical arts and student activities
- diminished upkeep and maintenance of facilities
- significantly decreased funding
- cuts in the level of administrative and supervisory staffing
- cuts in the number of teachers and/or guidance counselors
- grade level responsibilities of the principal
- cuts in the number of support staff
- decreases in student services
- cuts in the educational media staffing
- increases in student enrollment that cannot be accommodated

- takeover by the state
- inordinate user fees
- changes in the student population that warrant program or staffing modification(s) that cannot be accommodated, e.g., the number of special needs students or vocational students or students with limited English proficiency

LIST OF COMMENDATIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Commendations

Core Values, Beliefs, and 21st Century Learning Expectations

1. The identification of a set of core values (ICARE) that are embodied by the vast majority of students and staff and that positively impacts the culture of the school
2. The dynamic, collaborative and inclusive process by which the school identified and committed to its core values, beliefs and academic expectations
3. The evidence of curricular changes as a result of the core values, beliefs and learning expectations
4. The plan to regularly review and update the 21st century learning expectations with the input of multiple stakeholders
5. The faculty reading of *Good to Great* by Jim Collins to frame conversations about the direction of the school, and the district-wide read in 2006 of *The World is Flat* by Thomas Friedman
6. The extent to which the core values, beliefs about learning, and 21st century learning expectations are embedded into the culture of the school

Curriculum

1. The AHS staff is committed to providing high quality curriculum to all students
2. The work of most academic departments to create a common curriculum format via Atlas Rubicon software
3. Teachers incorporate technology in their curriculum and emphasize informed/ethical use of technology
4. AHS provides multiple authentic learning opportunities through community service, Senior Capstone Project, physical education courses such as Survival and Wilderness Camping, and the onsite day care program
5. Academic departments are working toward creating common assessments to validate the alignment of written and taught curriculum

6. The focus on depth of understanding and application of knowledge

Instruction

1. The use of evaluations by administrators to ensure that instructional practices are consistent with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations
2. The variety of strategies used by teachers to personalize instruction
3. The faculty's commitment to high quality instruction that focuses on inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking
4. The engagement of students as active and self-directed learners through a variety of researched-based instructional techniques
5. The implementation of the Learning Center to support student learning
6. The teachers who maximize the use of available technology to enhance student learning
7. The use of assessments data results to inform instructional practices

Assessment of and for Student Learning

1. The wide variety of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments, in order to revise and improve curriculum and instruction used by teachers
2. The specific, timely, and corrective feedback given by teachers to ensure students revise and improve their work
3. The practice of providing rubrics to students prior to each summative assessment
4. The common course assessments developed by several departments during professional meeting time
5. The pervasive use formative assessments by teachers to inform and adapt instruction
6. The communication of the applicable school-wide learning expectations to students prior to each unit of study

School Culture and Leadership

1. The existence of a positive school culture, which makes AHS a safe and welcoming place for students and staff
2. The impressive array of extra-curricular clubs and organizations, funded by the district, available to the student population

3. The exceptional demeanor and deportment of students in the school indicating a respectful and supportive school culture
4. The strong communication and collaboration between the school committee, superintendent, and principal
5. The principal's instructional leadership and advocacy for the school's core values and beliefs about learning and the programs that support them
6. The dedication by administrators to research-based supervision and evaluation that is focused on the improvement of teaching and learning
7. The hiring of new faculty members that has resulted in more manageable classes sizes
8. The AHS faculty's initiative in creating a number of one-time or short-term events that foster student involvement, such as after-school activities, international exchange programs, and community service opportunities that fosters student involvement
9. The lack of barriers to general student enrollment in core and elective courses
10. The school developing advisory program which ensures that all students have at least one adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well, and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
11. The leadership and initiative demonstrated by teachers essential to the improvement of the school

School Resources for Learning

1. The comprehensive array of academic, social, and emotional support programs and services available to assist students in meeting 21st century expectations
2. The variety of methods used to ensure that families, especially those most in need, are provide with information about student support services
3. The use of technology to deliver a wide-range of student support services
4. The guidance department provides comprehensive student support information on the AHS website AHS has developed and published a Guidance Department Curriculum Guide
5. The school nurses who use a website, appropriate referrals, and membership on school-based teams to provide preventative health and directive intervention services to students
6. The collaboration among support staff, special educators, and general educators across the school
7. The connections fostered by AHS with community social service and health agencies
8. The active role of the librarian in supporting the curriculum

Community Resources for Learning

1. The community which raises funds to support programs and services
2. The pride exhibited by students and the community in the high school and its programs despite the age and condition of the building
3. The media center renovation which provides students with the opportunity to achieve 21st century learning objectives
4. The efforts of school staff to actively engage parents and families as partners in each student's education

Recommendations

Core Values, Beliefs, and 21st Century Learning Expectations

1. Develop school-wide analytic rubrics for each of the seven school-wide expectations
2. Implement the plan to regularly review and update the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations
3. Ensure that the school-wide rubrics measuring the 21st century learning expectations is being used across all disciplines by all teachers

Curriculum

1. Establish additional time for the collaborative and ongoing work necessary to maintain 21st century standards in curriculum
2. Develop strategies for creating more interdisciplinary and cross-curricular communication and course work in the curriculum
3. Include instructional strategies and assessment practices in curriculum maps
4. Ensure that the facility adequately supports the implementation of the curriculum
5. Complete the common curriculum template

Instruction

1. Provide opportunities for all teachers to engage in peer review and to share best practices with teachers throughout the school community
2. Ensure all teachers have equitable access to modern technology and appropriate training to enhance instructional practices
3. Increase opportunities for students to participate in interdisciplinary learning
4. Increase formal opportunities for teachers of common classes to analyze student work to inform instruction
5. Increase opportunities for teachers to review data in order to enhance student learning and improve instruction

Assessment of and for Student Learning

1. Provide sufficient formal time for teachers to collaborate in the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments
2. Develop and implement a formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess whole-school and individual students progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
3. Develop and implement a mechanism to communicate individual and whole-school progress on the school's 21st century learning expectations to all stakeholders
4. Formalize and implement school-wide the process of collecting, disaggregating, and analyzing data to identify and respond to potential inequities in student achievement
5. Ensure that grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning

School Culture and Leadership

1. Ensure that research-based instructional strategies and teacher collaboration are supported by the school schedule
2. Ensure that every student over the course of their high school experience is enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core class (English/language arts, social studies, math, science, or world language)

3. Involve teachers in the identification of professional development focused on the improvement of student learning and success
4. Ensure that the school's 21st century learning expectations are an integral part of the advisory program agendas
5. Develop and implement a plan to address overcrowding in classroom settings in which the use of lab and studio equipment presents potential safety hazards
6. Implement strategies to ensure that students, teachers, and parents take advantage of opportunities to participate in the decision-making process

School Resources for Learning

1. Assure the availability of language appropriate materials for assessing and placing ELL students
2. Ensure that appropriate licensed staff member are available to administer assessments to students with ELL needs

Community Resources for Learning

1. Develop and implement a long-range plan, with a timeline for completion and a source of funding, to completely address school facility needs
2. Address overcrowding in classroom settings in which the use of lab and studio equipment presents potential safety hazards
3. Addressed all health and safety issues including science labs, egress plans for evacuation, and handicap accessibility
4. Develop a budget that provides dependable revenue without reliance on grants and fundraising to consistently support programs
5. Develop funding plans for long-range planning, technology, and capital improvements
6. Develop and implement a plan to improve the overall cleanliness of the facility
7. Increase partnerships with area colleges to provide students with additional opportunities
8. Ensure that the families of all students are receiving report cards and other school communications regardless of Internet access and/or language barriers
9. Ensure that all teachers and building administrators are part of the budget development process
10. Ensure equitable distribution of school resources to support learning