

New England Association of School and Colleges, Inc.

Commission on Public Schools



Committee on Public Secondary Schools

Report of the Visiting Team for Messalonskee High School

Oakland, ME

September 22, 2019 - September 25, 2019

Edward Wilkins, Chair
David Walker, Assistant Chair
Paula Callan, Principal

STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS

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

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

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

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

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

Teaching and Learning Standards

Core Values and Beliefs About Learning

Curriculum

Instruction

Assessment of and for Student Learning

Support Standards

School Culture and Leadership

School Resources for Learning

Community Resources for Learning

CORE VALUES, BELIEFS, AND LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

CURRICULUM

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

INSTRUCTION

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT LEARNING

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

core values and beliefs about learning.

SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Support Standard

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

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

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

SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Support Standard

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

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

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

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Support Standard

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

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

School and Community Summary

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Messalonskee High School, located in Oakland, Maine, serves the communities of Belgrade, China, Oakland, Rome, and Sidney. While the population in each of these towns has remained relatively stable over the years, the towns of Belgrade, China, and Oakland experience an influx in their populations during the summer months as they are surrounded by lake shore property. Located equal distance between Portland and Bangor, the towns are traditional rural/suburban communities, with employment opportunities ranging from the medical profession to blue collar jobs.

With a combined population of 18,972, the communities are economically, racially, culturally, and ethnically similar. While we have a small group of students who come from different ethnic groups, the total population does not equal more than 0.5% of the population, and English is the primary language spoken by the majority of the population; a few students have parents who speak Spanish as well as French at home. Oakland's year round population is 6,198, followed by China (4,272), Sidney (4,234), Belgrade (3,148), and Rome (1,120). The median family income is as follows in each of the towns: Belgrade (\$74,901), China (\$74,826), Oakland (\$83,136), Rome (\$76,197), and Sidney (\$76,230).

While there is not any one specific industry that employs a majority of the residents there are a variety of employment opportunities available in the central Maine area. There is still a mill, Hutamaki, in operation over in the town of Waterville, there is a new medical facility in Augusta, Maine General Hospital, with outreach medical programs in Waterville and Oakland, Maine State Government employs many of the residences, as do the local educational institutions (Colby College, KVCC, and Thomas College) and RSU 18. And of course many of our residents work in the many retail businesses located in the Central Maine area.

In addition to Messalonskee High School with a population of 720 students, Messalonskee Middle School has 533 students in grades 6-8; China Middle School has 198 students in grades 5-8; Atwood Elementary has 238 students in grades PK-2; Williams Elementary has 212 students in grades 3-5; James Bean School has 261 students in PK-5; Belgrade Central has 241 students in PK-5; and China Primary School has 236 students in grades PK-4. It should be noted that students who attend China Middle School will most likely go to Erskine Academy for their high school education. We tend to enroll between 5-12 students annually at MHS.

RSU 18 per pupil expenditure for the 2016-2017 school year was \$10,846.21 compared to the state average expenditure of \$11,859.95. In the FY2016-2017, 55.27% of local resources was spent on funding public education.

Messalonskee High School includes students in grades 9-12 with the total enrollment of 720 students divided between 362 males and 358 females. The school enrollment has declined over the years due to an aging population in the community. We have not had an influx of new residents in the past five years. The ethnic, racial, and cultural composition of the school has shown a slight increase in the diversity of our student body: Asian Students (7), Black or African American (11), Hispanic (7), American Indian or Alaska Native (7), and Native Hawaiian (2). The average graduation rate over the past three years has been 93.6, while the average dropout rate has been below 2%. The graduation rate over the past five years has held steady at an average of 95%.

There are 51 teachers at Messalonskee High School, creating a ratio of 14:1. Individual teachers carry an average of anywhere from 10:1 to 25:1 depending on the course and number of sections offered. In those classes that are required for graduation, the average class size is 22-23 students.

We currently operate under a five-period day with the expectation that students take a minimum of four courses each semester. They must complete a learning experience in each of the four content areas during their four years of high school and balance the rest of their schedule with electives and other learning opportunities. To graduate from Messalonskee High School a student needs to earn 30 credits and must complete the following: 4 credits of English, 4 credits of math, 3 credits of social studies, 3 credits of science, 1.5 credits of physical

education, 1 credit of fine arts, .5 credit in health, .5 credit in career and educational development (JMG 9/10), 40 hours of community service and the remaining credits, 12.5, may be earned through elective offerings.

Students at MHS have access to multiple pathways in which to meet the graduation requirements. We have established relationships with our local colleges, Colby, Thomas, and KVCC, which for the student means that they can attend college courses at no fee to them. Annually over 100 students attend Mid-Maine Technical Center to pursue Career and Technical Education. We offer online courses through AP4All and Virtual High School. Dual Enrollment courses and Advanced Placement courses are offered to all students who wish to enroll in a course that offers a college level learning experience. We also offer seminars which are nine week learning opportunities with a specific focus that students can count as one of their learning experiences in the four major content areas.

Students are continuously recognized for the academic as well as co-curricular achievements. We host a Student of the Month assembly that recognizes students for the citizenship as well as personal contributions to the school. During these assemblies we also recognize the members of athletic teams, music groups (band/chorus), extracurricular organizations such as drama and robotics as well as staff members who have received professional recognition or perhaps have completed their master's program. Parents are invited to attend these assemblies and do so with pride. We post the quarterly honor roll in the local newspaper, The Morning Sentinel, as well as on the school's social media outlets.

Through our MELMAC Grant we have been able to offer our students many opportunities to visit college campuses throughout the state as well as out of state. This year our focus has been to expose our students to schools that focus on career and technical education as well as potential job placements throughout the central Maine area.

Unique to Messalonskee is our YES (Year End Studies) Program which occurs at the end of the school year for freshmen-juniors. Students select one full day or two half day seminars to participate in and based on availability they are assigned to their first and second selections. Offerings run the gamut from Haunted New England, Chemistry through Candy, Ratios and Percentages through Gambling, Farm to Home, Volleyball 101, Survival Camping and Basic Home Economics. Each seminar must have at least one of the Guiding Principles embedded in it as well as an academic standard. Both students and staff for the most part find this time as an opportunity to work with people they may never come in contact with during their four years of high school.

We have forged lasting relationships with local businesses who through monetary and other support mechanisms are able to offer our students a full plate of offerings both on the academic level as well as extra-curricular venue. Wrabacon has been a key sponsor of our robotics team, local and state police have made many appearances in our forensics class, Camden National Bank has funded several offerings for both staff and students.

The Messalonskee High School community offers a multitude of opportunities to meet the diverse learning needs of its students. Through ongoing community support, a caring and competent faculty/staff, and strong, vision-driven leadership, our students leave MHS as critical thinkers, creative problem solvers, and effective communicators.

Introduction

Introduction

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

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

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

Teaching and Learning Standards

Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

Curriculum

Instruction

Assessment of and for Student Learning

Support of Teaching and Learning Standards

School Culture and Leadership

School Resources for Learning

Community Resources for Learning

The accreditation program for public schools involves a threefold process: the self-study conducted by the local professional staff, the on-site evaluation conducted by the Committee's visiting team, and the follow-up program carried out by the school to implement the findings of its own self-study, the valid recommendations of the visiting team, and those identified by the Committee in the follow-up process. Continued accreditation requires that the school be reevaluated at least once every ten years and that it shows 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 Messalonskee High School, a committee of ten members, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned teachers and administrators in the school to appropriate subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities, and facilities available for young people.

The self-study of Messalonskee High School extended over a period of 36 school months from September 2016 to September 2019. For the first 24 months, the school blended other curriculum and instruction projects with the self-study work. During the final twelve months, the self-study became the school's intensive focus. The visiting

team was pleased to note that twelve students, ten citizens, ten parents, and two school board members joined the professional staff in the self-study deliberations.

Public schools evaluated by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools must complete appropriate materials to assess their alignment with the Standards for Accreditation and the quality of their educational offerings in light of the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations, and unique student population. In addition to using the Self-Study Guides developed by a representative group of New England educators and approved by the Committee, Messalonskee 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 Team

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

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 45 hours shadowing 12 students for a half-day
- a total of 24 hours of classroom observation (in addition to time shadowing students)
- numerous informal observations in and around the school
- tours of the facility
- individual meetings with 20 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and assessment of student learning
- group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers

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

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

Standard 1 Indicator 1

Conclusions

In June 2015, the Messalonskee High School (MHS) community, in conjunction with Regional School Unit 18 (RSU 18) personnel, engaged 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.

Before 2017, MHS had operated under a set of Habits of Mind developed under the Mass-Customized Learning Model and derived from the work of Arthur L. Costa. Then, coordinated with a change in grading software, MHS adopted its own version of Maine's Guiding Principles to use as its 21st-century learning expectations.

A forum entitled "20/20: Preparing RSU 18 for a Bright Future" included parents, students, faculty and staff, school board members, and community citizens who engaged in a process to build a vision for the entire district and to establish a comfortable, clear understanding of that vision as it applies to Messalonskee High School. Such a vision provides unified, K-12 principles to regulate the educational process. To establish the underlying philosophy of RSU 18, the group reviewed and referenced the research of Robert Marzano, Carol Dweck, and Arthur Costa. This group built its "Guiding Principles" in connection with Maine Department of Education regulations which state that "The knowledge and skills described in the Maine Department of Education Regulation 132 support Maine students in achieving the goals established in Maine's Guiding Principles." Thus, the "Guiding Principles" for RSU 18 and Messalonskee High School blend effectively into a unified vision, meeting both state and local values. Also, while the Maine Guiding Principles supported a direction for this work, MHS's "Guiding Principles" broke from the state document when the group deemed it appropriate for MHS and RSU 18.

Once the forum completed its work, MHS established its own mission statement that the faculty wrote, reviewed and revised. Following a discussion of the final document in the spring of 2017, MHS faculty voted unanimously to adopt this mission statement: "The Messalonskee High School community fosters critical thinkers, effective communicators, and creative problem solvers." The MHS community expresses its ongoing unity behind these documents. The school has posted the mission statement in a number of physical representations, including two postings in hallways of the building. Many staff members include the mission statement as part of their email signatures. The various handbooks contain the statement as well. MHS produced and distributed faculty T-shirts that display the mission statement. However, MHS has yet to begin the full practice of its values documents and the transition from the "Habits of Mind" to the MHS "Guiding Principles," created as the school's 21st-century learning expectations, remains a "work in progress."

Survey results indicate that 73 percent of students claim familiarity with the core values and beliefs about learning. The survey also indicates that 81.7 percent of parents have familiarity with these documents, demonstrating a substantial degree of awareness within the community. While the core values and beliefs about learning may not appear visible and forceful, these values clearly have become an embedded part of the school's atmosphere. Yet, not settling for this degree of knowledge, MHS has expressed two goals for application of its guiding documents: to display and reference them more consistently in classrooms, and to develop creative ways for students to apply and practice the core values and mission statement more consistently as part of moving toward full implementation of the 21st century learning expectations.

Since Messalonskee High School engaged 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, students will have consistent experiences in practicing and achieving the school's 21st-century learning expectations when MHS completes full, visible implementation and practice of the school's values documents.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- teachers
- students
- parents
- Endicott survey

Standard 1 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Messalonskee High School (MHS), through study and adaptation of Maine's Guiding Principles and several research sources, has implemented five challenging and measurable 21st-century learning expectations for all students, identified as the MHS Guiding Principles, which address academic, social, and civic competencies, with specific and measurable criteria for success, such as school-wide analytic rubrics, which define targeted high levels of achievement; however, the use of school-wide analytic rubrics remains sporadic.

MHS selected elements of the Maine Guiding Principles that they deemed most appropriate to guide their students' work and, after conversion to the local language, integrated them into the course and graduation requirements. Having placed these principles in PowerSchool, the school's system for documenting student achievement, and having identified them as the school's 21st-century learning expectations, the district expects teachers to create assignments that allow students to practice and master the criteria named in the principles.

Prior to the 2016-2017 school year, MHS and Regional School Unit 18 (RSU 18) assessed students on a set of standards titled the Habits of Mind. These standards derived from a local adaptation of Al Costa's work meant to reflect local priorities, with additions from Carol Dweck's writing. RSU 18 implemented the fundamentals of the system district-wide; MHS asked teachers to focus on specific principles intended to grow student investment and achievement. Working with a consultant from the Great Schools Partnership, MHS teachers discussed these principles at length in a day-long in-service before deciding to implement and score the Habits of Mind.

However, due to changed state graduation requirements, and hoping to simplify learning expectations for students, MHS decided to phase out the Habits of Mind and to create a Guiding Principles committee, consisting of teachers and the principal, with the goal of building a school-wide rubric to measure growth and achievement of the new MHS Guiding Principles. While this rubric continues as a "working document" and some teachers use it to score student success in achieving the Guiding Principles in their course work, the rubric has not achieved widespread use as a formal assessment tool. Nonetheless, MHS has used the Guiding Principles to embed standards in the curriculum, although "mastery" no longer plays a role in graduation requirements. Faculty and students at MHS continue their work to implement the Guiding Principles as an authentic measure of student achievement.

While MHS has embedded the Guiding Principles in the standards attached to individual courses, matching appropriate principles to specific assignments, full implementation of challenging and measurable 21st-century learning expectations for all students with specific and measurable criteria for success, with defined, targeted high levels of achievement, remains incomplete.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- parents
- department leaders
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 1 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Most of the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st-century learning expectations are comfortably reflected in the culture of the school, and direct but do not drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in classrooms, and guide many of Messalonskee High School's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations.

The core values, beliefs about learning, and 21st-century learning expectations have become an organic part of the culture for the vast majority of staff and students at MHS. The values and beliefs identified appear throughout the school climate and culture because they come naturally to the majority of school community members. All constituents adhere to these principles, although not all hold conscious awareness of their behavior. Survey results show that 84.5 percent of students and 73.6 percent of parents find the learning expectations clear. When asked about the core values, for example, most people reflect for a moment and then express some awareness or understanding.

These values have produced energetic development of and participation in courses and programs that should meet the needs of all learners at MHS. The outcomes derived from such programs as Jobs for Maine Graduates, Alternative Education, the Functional Life Skills program, and the principles and practices of mainstream classrooms. MHS built the "tagging" system around Guided Study to enhance collaboration among students and teachers as a support for students' efforts to overcome academic struggles. With the implementation of the Guiding Principles, students have grown significantly in the degree to which they meet their academic responsibilities. Students readily take advantage of the many co-curricular clubs and community service options, as they regularly meet the 40-hour community service graduation requirement. In addition, many MHS students choose to attend the Mid-Maine Technical Center (MMTC) to develop career skills not addressed at their home school.

MHS's core values, beliefs about learning, and 21st-century learning expectations direct both faculty and students in addressing curriculum and instruction. Faculty regularly review and revise courses offered in the program of studies. In addition to including the various values documents, the on-line guide aligns courses with measurement tools and learning standards. Courses offer multiple levels from foundational to Advanced Placement and dual enrollment. MHS recently restructured the Alternative Education program to support students who struggle in the mainstream, with the ultimate goal of supporting students' achieving at their highest, appropriate level. When absenteeism and inappropriate use of opportunities to revise and retake assessments became problematic, the values expressed in the core documents supported efforts by faculty, parents, and students to correct these situations.

The allocation of school resources typically supports the school's core values, although some issues have arisen at times around freezes and limiting budget allocations to 70 percent distributions of the school budget. Thus, some legitimate requests for support of programs and courses have been limited and/or declined. Despite these challenges, teachers and administrators have worked hard to maintain a firm focus on student needs. Departments and administrators collaborate to build a needs-based budget that reflects the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st-century learning expectations. In particular, recent adjustments to district budgeting procedures have supplied building and program administrators enhanced autonomy to address these issues.

MHS has established a shared-leadership model through the school's leadership team. Membership consists of administration, professional staff, and students who work together to collect and distribute information useful to decision-making. The leadership team follows by-laws that require them to "Be driven by the mission and vision of the district and school; Distribute leadership and increase collaboration among all stakeholders; Have broad representation of all stakeholders and be a positive, unifying force for the school community; and Be future-focused and responsive to the needs of the school and its stakeholders." The leadership team holds substantial responsibility for building and maintaining the climate of the school, as well as ensuring a voice for all constituents in the school's decision-making, improvement of student programs, and oversight of selecting Students of the Month.

Since most of the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and 21st-century learning expectations are comfortably reflected in the culture of the school, direct but do not drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in classrooms, and guide many of the policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations, most students receive appropriate support in practicing and achieving the school's 21st-century learning expectations, although the school has expressed the need to make practice of these values more visible in the daily life of Messalonskee High School.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- teachers
- parents
- school board
- department leaders
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 1 Indicator 4

Conclusions

Messalonskee High School has a process to review and revise its core values, beliefs, and 21st-century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, as well as on district and school community priorities but has yet to implement this system fully.

MHS has reviewed and revised its core values, beliefs about learning, and 21st-century learning expectations at the building level, as well as participating in a district-wide, formal process to review the values and priorities of Regional School Unit 18 (RSU 18). In June 2015, the district assembled a group in excess of 100 individuals from all elements of the community, and these stakeholders created a district vision statement and worked to revise the district strategic plan to support all learners.

In January 2017, the faculty of MHS voted to revise the school's mission statement to bring it in line with the district statement. The school also developed a set of 21st-century learning expectations aligned with the Maine Guiding Principles that they call the "MHS Guiding Principles." MHS has connected these "Guiding Principles" with the various curricula of the school and has developed a rubric to assess student success in developing the skills related to the "Guiding Principles." Teachers have developed relevant content-specific assessments as well, in an effort to ensure full compliance with the administrative directive to assess and report student achievement of the MHS Guiding Principles.

Teachers and administrators agree that to implement fully the MHS Guiding Principles, teachers need focused professional development, and time to collaborate on how best to integrate the elements of the program into course content. The administration, faculty, and staff have begun a concerted effort to highlight the various values documents at MHS in a variety of places and formats, including the school's website, documents sent home to parents, report cards, the MHS Program of Studies, student handbook, and signage throughout the building.

Since Messalonskee High School has developed a process to review and revise its core values, beliefs about learning, and 21st-century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, as well as on district and school community priorities, when the school fully implements this system, students' ability to access and practice the school's "Guiding Principles" will be enhanced.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school board
- community members
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 1 Commendations

Commendation

The extensive involvement of all constituencies in the development of the core values and beliefs about learning

Commendation

The development of district-wide K-12 principles to regulate the educational process and to support the core values, beliefs about learning, and 21st century learning expectations at Messalonskee High School

Commendation

The embedded, organic nature of the core values in the climate and practices of Messalonskee High School

Commendation

The lively, respectful interactions among administration, faculty and students resulting from living the core values

Commendation

The completion of a clear process to review and revise the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and 21st century learning expectations

Commendation

The development of a number of tools to support assessment of student achievement of the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and 21st century learning expectations

Commendation

The administration's and staff's effective modeling of critical thinkers, effective communicators, and creative problem-solvers through the leadership team process

Standard 1 Recommendations

Recommendation

Ensure the active distribution, display, referencing and practice of the core values, beliefs about learning, and the MHS Guiding Principles as the school's 21st century learning expectations

Recommendation

Ensure full implementation of the school-wide rubrics for assessing student achievement of the MHS Guiding Principles as the school's 21st century learning expectations

Recommendation

Ensure more regular use of the system developed to review the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and the MHS Guiding Principles as the school's 21st century learning expectations

Recommendation

Build a thorough system for installation and implementation of core values, beliefs about learning, and the MHS Guiding Principles as the school's 21st century learning expectations

Standard 2 Indicator 1

Conclusions

Messalonskee High School (MHS) has purposefully designed its curriculum to allow all students to practice and achieve the school's clearly articulated content-area learning expectations, but the design used is idiosyncratic, and the procedures and structures to tie those expectations to the MHS Guiding Principles, the school's 21st-century learning expectations, remain under construction.

The recent history of the curriculum at MHS contains conflicting structures and directions. MHS invested significant time and energy to implement a vision for proficiency-based secondary education that became mutable, allowing a blend with more traditional measures. MHS anticipated a future of standards-based diplomas and graduation based on demonstration of cross-disciplinary proficiencies, exerting strong influences on its curriculum design and construction. MHS now finds itself simultaneously retracing its steps toward proficiency, while its current curricular planning moves toward specified content-area learning, measured in particular content expectations expressed in terms of the broader 21st-century learning expectations, in the form of MHS's Guiding Principles.

MHS presently frames the observable products of curriculum design in terms of content-area learning expectations. For example, each description of a learning experience in the Program of Studies states the learning targets for the course, most often in terms of the Maine State Learning Results or the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Standards, depending on whether an English or world languages class. Learning experiences – courses and external programs – within individual content areas often have common, content-specific learning targets. The range of individual English classes aims at the demonstration of skills, for example, and the creation of products common to all English studies. Thus, the developing curricular structure has begun to foster commonalities such as a good speech, a cogently framed argument, or a well-designed experiment.

No consistent and readily visible alignment exists, however, between individual content expectations and the 21st-century learning expectations in the documents described in the Program of Studies, although it is not difficult to foresee which content expectations will align with which MHS Guiding Principles in the years ahead.

The unusually large cohort of MHS students pursuing special academic programs (i.e., AP4ALL, Virtual High School, college classes, MHS classes with dual enrollment at local post-secondary institutions, MMTC, alternative education) means that in parallel with MHS's own expectations, expectations specific to the other providers exist as well. These may connect in substantially similar ways to MHS's own expectations, or point in different directions, requiring careful attention to the alignment of the various expectations.

Messalonskee High School's purposefully designed curriculum will enable students to succeed more readily in demonstrating skills identified through the MHS Guiding Principles as the school's 21st-century learning expectations when specific content-area learning tasks appear in clearly drawn curriculum documents.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student work
- teachers
- department leaders
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 2 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Curriculum at Messalonskee High School (MHS) describes a series of academic learning opportunities written using a single, common format, but the format is idiosyncratic and does not necessarily include units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills; the school's 21st-century learning expectations; instructional strategies; and assessment practices that include the use of specific and measurable criteria for success, such as course-specific syllabi and rubrics, and school-wide analytic rubrics.

Still, these course-description documents function as local curriculum guides, and, taken together, serve as a written curriculum archive. Curriculum documents detail the content, concepts, and skills provided in the learning opportunities, list relevant standards from the MHS Guiding Principles, or the standards promulgated by national professional bodies such as the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). The course descriptions may also refer to instructional practices, but only occasionally incorporate essential questions and the 21st-century learning expectations. The state, and where appropriate national, standards and their performance indicators, provide the specific and measurable criteria for success. In general, self-study data concerning documents defining instruction and assessment practices suggest that satisfaction among MHS parents and professional staff falls in the 50 to 70 percent range.

MHS has written the on-line documents at the level of the entire course offering, so the instructional practices mentioned may pertain to a single unit, a series of units, or the whole run of the course. Courses may occupy less than a year, with semester courses commonplace because of the schedule's structure. The collection of course syllabi commonly contains more fine-grained information. Essential questions, when they appear, usually appear here. Teachers place these documents in the hands of students and parents at the start of a course.

Teachers do not employ school-wide analytic rubrics pervasively. For example, some English classes use a writing rubric, but it awaits greater school-wide use in other content classes that elicit consistently designed writing products. However, teachers generally share indicators of specific criteria for success in other ways, as expressed in task-specific rubrics, and even more commonly in scoring guides that often accompany projects, demonstration tasks, and assessments.

When curriculum at Messalonskee High School more consistently conforms to a common format that includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills; the school's 21st-century learning expectations; instructional strategies; and assessment practices that include the use of specific and measurable criteria for success, such as course-specific rubrics, and school-wide analytic rubrics, students will produce excellent products more consistently, confident that they can replicate procedures and products meeting the school's 21st-century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student work
- teachers
- department leaders
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 2 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Messalonskee High School's curriculum promotes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through inquiry and problem solving, cross-disciplinary learning, and authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school in a number of its own learning activities, as well as in those of other institutions with which MHS works; while higher-order thinking activities continue to develop, and universal instruction in informed and ethical use of technology stopped as a school-wide practice in 2016, teachers continue to address this topic as it relates to their specific courses.

All courses address inquiry and problem-solving in their classes, and include practice in the procedures and taxonomy – naming and classifying components – of their disciplines. For example, a number of English learning opportunities like Journalism and the Argument-Social Issues course promote inquiry and problem-solving. The sciences and social studies have offerings with a similar focus. In addition to courses promoting advanced and accelerated course work within these departments, other examples include course work in AP for All, dual enrollment, independent studies, and Virtual High School.

Students can pursue cross-disciplinary learning through experiences like Sports and Social Change, and Medical Terminology, at the intersection of classical languages and life sciences, and Pre-engineering, connecting mathematics, science, and technology. The faculty has identified constraints in scheduling and availability of staff when trying to develop new options for interdisciplinary curricular options, however, and continue to pursue scheduling options that would allow departments to promote links among their disciplines.

Authentic learning opportunities exist both inside and outside MHS, offering a variety of applied and academic learning experiences. Students who enroll at the Mid-Maine Technical Center (MMTC) have opportunities to pursue trade-based courses and to complete professional certificates allowing them to work in licensed trades. The Year-End Studies (YES) program falls in the last few days of the school year and offers hands-on study in such topics as fitness, food science, outdoor activities, quilting, Computer Aided Design (CAD) and 3-D design basics, and college networking that supports students in making connections to the post-secondary programs best suited to their interests and future plans.

Students and their parents report via survey responses a conviction that higher-order thinking and problem solving form a significant facet of the learning experience. While an emphasis on these behaviors and activities exist in the written curriculum, reviewing survey data, and evidence of practice make it difficult to gauge precisely the extent to which faculty and students carry this emphasis into practice.

Opportunities to employ technology creatively exist, also. Offerings in Media Literacy and Film, Communication Arts, Music Production, and Web Design, teach and use the tools that make it possible to create digital products that communicate ideas and arguments to broader audiences. Programmatic efforts to direct students toward informed and ethical use of technology existed before 2016 – such as a school-wide assembly at the beginning of the year to teach appropriate use of social media and to address questions around cyber-bullying – but students do little today besides lessons that teachers impart alongside the use of technology to create and perform classroom work. Prior to receiving school-issued laptops, students must complete a series of online trainings on the Appropriate Use Policy (AUP). Topics in this training include the nuances of plagiarism and the responsible inclusion of digital sources in their writing. Courses that address informed and ethical use of technology include Media Literacy and Film Communication Arts, Music Production, Web Design, and the New Commons Project through English classes in association with the University of Maine at Farmington.

MHS offers a wide range of learning opportunities in and out of school – over a hundred students avail themselves of the job- and career-centric offerings at the Mid-Maine Technical Center (MMTC) – a number of which lead to professional and technical certificates and recognitions, indications of authentic learning. MHS also offers an out-of-school opportunity for learning via the 40-hour community service requirement for graduation. The middle school and high school choruses recorded a nationally acclaimed album of songs about the

Holocaust.

When Messalonskee High School's curriculum consistently and universally 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, and informed and ethical use of technology, students will acquire more durable and deeper understanding of the content and skills they learn.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student work
- teachers
- students
- Endicott survey
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 2 Indicator 4

Conclusions

At Messalonskee High School (MHS), the notably diverse curriculum exists primarily as a set of content standards, one or more of which address a particular learning experience, and a remarkable degree of excellent teaching happens daily, but limited procedural means exist to ensure clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum.

The degree of agreement between the written and taught curriculum reveals itself primarily through the degree to which students achieve the content standards. This proves problematic in light of the switch to PowerSchool as a reporting tool, and to numeric grades as a measure of student achievement. Although content standards and progress toward them can be shared on PowerSchool, students and parents tend to focus on course scores rather than the fulfillment of the school's 21st-century learning expectations, since not all teachers present the learning expectations clearly to their classes, preferring to concentrate on content, concepts, and skills. Consequently, MHS underutilizes what could become an efficient means for recording alignment between the written and taught curriculum.

The student learning objectives (SLOs), that teachers develop each year, form another more focused tool to measure alignment between the written and taught curriculum. The SLOs measure growth in the command of content standards – the written curriculum – based on a unit of instruction and practice over time – the taught curriculum. Generally, they pertain to a selected part of the curriculum only, thus limiting their utility as a check of alignment between written and taught curriculum, and student achievement of the school's 21st-century learning expectations. Relying to a large extent on assessment products to demonstrate the alignment between written and taught curriculum places significant weight on tools designed for another purpose. Some teachers appear confused as to how they should score student achievement of the 21st-century learning expectations and how they can report that achievement on the traditional grading scale. While the school has offered training to support this activity, not all faculty members have chosen to avail themselves of that training. Thus, expectations for achieving standards vary among departments, faculty tend not to emphasize curricular alignment, and administrators have not made alignment a particular point of emphasis in teacher observation and evaluation.

When Messalonskee High School students experience a greater degree of confidence in the curricular alignment between what teachers ask them to do, and what the written curriculum expects them to do, the closer ties between the written and the taught curriculum applied throughout their school experience will result in greater student fulfillment of the school's 21st-century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 2 Indicator 5

Conclusions

Effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation exist between and among some academic areas within Messalonskee High School (MHS), as well as with some sending schools in the district.

The process to review curricular coordination and vertical articulation has structures in place in the various groups within the confines of Messalonskee High School, but the bodies that perform this task between the high school and its sending schools show inconsistent outcomes. A number of shifts within the schedule, in departmental leadership procedures, and limited time available for departmental work, has caused limited assessment and revisions of the connections desirable for consistent curricular plans and experiences. Additionally, efforts by MHS to establish conversations with the sending middle school have met resistance from the middle school administration.

The assistant superintendent holds responsibility for district-level curriculum issues and represents the only permanent fixture in the system. MHS has addressed vertical articulation between the middle and high school in some discrete circumstances. Managing the transition between middle school and high school science classes offers a recent example, as the science department created an alternative pathway for students not ready to enter ninth grade biology directly. The science department created course offerings to allow taking biology later, without jeopardizing access to more advanced science classes. Other recent ad-hoc, building-wide curriculum teams have reviewed curricula in the world languages, mathematics, and social studies. Departments have received a substantial degree of autonomy in building content standards and measurements as various requirements from the state and local objectives have arisen to require adjustment of curricular content.

Mid-Maine Technical Center (MMTC) and MHS have worked together, thanks to some state career and technical education funding, to create extensive crosswalks between the schools' two sets of standards and relevant industrial and professional credentialing standards. The high school content leads and principal completed the crosswalk work to ensure that MHS students receive scores on these sets of standards. Thus, students receive experience in realms leading directly to the world of work, as well as to post-secondary education for further preparation in technical fields.

The significant number of students participating in Virtual High School, AP4All, dual enrollment, and other instructional opportunities requires coordination between MHS and outside providers to ensure student success. Although outside providers generally hold responsibility for curriculum definition and development, attending to student readiness to meet the demands of these outside agencies falls to MHS.

Common planning time, when available, has sometimes been used to address the curriculum within academic departments, but there has been a number of other demands placed on it. Accommodating the shift to a five-by-five schedule, coping with the relatively abrupt end of work toward proficiency-based-schools, and other major events in the life of the school, have eaten into that time. Consequently, shifting patterns and principles have led to the unclear direction and disjointed accomplishments in coordination and articulation of the curriculum, especially between Messalonskee High School and its sending schools.

As Messalonskee High School accomplishes its objectives for effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation through curriculum review procedures, MHS will grow successful curricular practices between and among all academic areas within the school, as well as with sending schools.

Sources of Evidence

- teacher interview
- teachers

- department leaders
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 2 Indicator 6

Conclusions

At Messalonskee High School (MHS), staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are, for the most part, sufficient to implement fully the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities.

Specific, limited deficiencies arise from time to time, and MHS has addressed these issues satisfactorily. MHS made staff reductions of a partial to a full position in the 2018-2019 school year, causing increases to section sizes in some required courses, and in elective offerings as well. Class sizes now range generally from the low teens to the low twenties. Few rooms appear crowded at any given time of the day.

Staff and administration generally regard funding as adequate to the task, but problems have arisen historically in expending budgeted funds as the fiscal year progresses, due primarily to a practice of limiting expenditures to 70 percent of the budgeted figure. In particular, this limitation has affected managing renewals of textbooks and licenses for digital resources that departments tend to address at the end of the school year. Teachers and administrators hope recent central office changes in budgeting and disbursement procedures, undertaken with a view to increasing autonomy in individual buildings, will address this issue.

The highly prized and praised YES program has limited funds detailed for each activity and, while the program can call on the transportation department for field trips, it relies in part on grants and gifts. Thus, a consensus of teachers holds that the program would benefit from having its own dedicated piece of the budget. However, this program falls during the last few days of the school year, meaning the total time dedicated to the course work has significant limits, raising questions as to the total funding worthy of dedication to the program. Nonetheless, teachers and students alike respect the program and assert its value.

The physical plant had some particular deficiencies to address. For example, some science labs needed propane, sinks, and power outlets sufficient to their purposes, and administration has consulted teachers in the sciences concerning the needed improvements, funding for which became part of the bond issue mentioned elsewhere. MHS has corrected these issues. The library and media center can execute its mission with the resources currently available.

MHS solidly supports the technology ancillary to its mission. The district supports 1:1 MacBook laptops, requiring a considerable financial commitment, especially after the partial demise of the Maine Learning Technology Initiative (MLTI). Recent updates to the WIFI system have made broadband access pervasive, and have eliminated previous student reports of accessibility issues. Video displays have grown ubiquitous, either via projectors or monitors connected with Apple TV, and faculty use them frequently.

Support for extra- and co-curricular programs is anchored by two modern facilities, an exemplary performing arts center, and a remarkable, brand-new multi-season, multi-sport athletics complex. Performing arts, music, and athletics receive substantial support in the budget, from large and active booster networks, and by the community-at-large. Constituencies report frequent and enthusiastic attendance – and not just for sports – by school board members, central office leadership, teachers and community members.

Since curriculum forms an ample portion of students' experience in their school lives, and staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are sufficient to implement fully the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other school learning opportunities at Messalonskee High School, students receive substantial support in achieving the school's 21st-century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

Standard 2 Indicator 7

Conclusions

Regional School Unit 18 (RSU 18) has plans and procedures in place to provide 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, but does not always achieve this goal.

The reasons for this shortfall have proven varied and many, and while no one impediment taken individually may present an obstacle to success, taken together the amalgam may easily present one. Until recently, content leaders worked in curricular areas to direct partially the curricular work of each department, but these positions no longer exist. The aforementioned 70 percent limit on the expenditure of the allotted budget has been rectified through more autonomy granted to the school leadership in planning and expenditure of funds, but some residual issues remain from past shortfalls in providing needed materials, equipment, and curricular work.

After leaving the Maine Cohort for Customized Learning (MCCL) – a coalition of school systems, organizations, and individuals from Maine, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania committed to supporting proficiency-based, customized learning systems – the district gave staff essential local control over curriculum growth and revision. RSU 18 then made Robert J. Marzano's research, as summarized in *The Art and Science of Teaching: Comprehensive Framework for Effective Instruction* (Marzano 2007), the central focus in curriculum design and development throughout the district. Staff completed this work through release days or paid summer work. This process has given the curriculum a strong foundation, but an insufficient framework to continue examination and development of curriculum exists at present.

Teachers share a need to have professional development time and tasks allotted so they become more profitably employed on specific, useful projects. Currently, the structure of professional development, intended to offer a universal experience to all faculty, seems of limited utility, absorbing a resource that could be used more productively. That time frustration may resolve to some degree with completion of the evaluation process and the resulting outcomes on which MHS may build professional development.

This devolution has begun to happen in the form of a Department-led Development Plan (DLPD) that enables individual content areas to manage their professional development time in a more focused style appropriate to each discipline. A number of the DLPD plans have curriculum work as the major, or one of the major, focuses chosen for the 2019-2020 school year. Faculty also identify the contraction in staff that occurred two years ago as a detriment to curriculum growth and development, as a smaller number of personnel feel stretched over the same or more responsibilities and tasks, with time resources shifting to other activities.

Staff considers finances of little concern as an obstacle to ongoing, collaborative development and revision of curriculum. Staff, in general, feel adequate support in their need to attend conferences, to receive materials necessary to their work, and to have control of their process. Thus, the relative lack of assessment results and current research employed to revise and develop curriculum seemed not a matter of insufficient resources other than time for planning, research, and collaboration.

When Regional School Unit 18 provides Messalonskee High School with sufficient time resources, as well as sufficient personnel and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research, MHS will have greater success in building the foundations and structures of a productive curriculum to support student achievement of the school's 21st-century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- teachers
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 2 Commendations

Commendation

The detailed presentation of measurement topics and learning targets in Course of Studies materials on the portal and on paper

Commendation

The development of cross-disciplinary offerings, and inquiry and problem solving instruction making a strong entrance into MHS's curriculum

Commendation

The varied curriculum, not just in the Course of Studies at MHS proper, but also through the breadth of connections to special academic programs and technical education

Commendation

The growth of regional articulation work with Mid-Maine Technical Center and other sending schools

Commendation

The cooperation between the middle school and high school in identifying the need for parallel approaches to ninth grade science

Commendation

The provision of services and facilities that support an impressive range of activities and opportunities inside and beyond the classroom

Commendation

The devolution of professional development decision-making through the department-led professional development (DLPD) plan

Standard 2 Recommendations

Recommendation

Extend the reach and application of school-wide analytic rubrics

Recommendation

Build and extend cross-disciplinary learning opportunities

Recommendation

Extend the reach of authentic learning experiences with a view to making them pervasive and frequent

Recommendation

Create strong, articulated vertical connections, from content-area learning expectations to the expectations embedded in the Guiding Principles

Recommendation

Ensure equitable allocation of resources to activities such as the Year End Studies (YES) program that, because of their newness or distinctiveness, do not yet have a fixed home in the allocation of funding

Recommendation

Promote curriculum review and coordination in the hierarchy of competitors for teacher non-instructional time

Recommendation

Develop techniques and promote habits of documenting and monitoring student progress toward achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations, as identified in the school's Guiding Principles

Standard 3 Indicator 1

Conclusions

At Messalonskee High School (MHS), teachers examine instructional practices sporadically to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st-century learning expectations.

Messalonskee High School has clearly stated core values, beliefs, and 21st-century learning expectations, identified at MHS as the Guiding Principles. In addition, departments have developed academic standards for content areas that they assess. However, teachers use few common rubrics, except for the Guiding Principles rubric, which they use inconsistently. That inconsistency limits opportunities to revise and grow instructional practices.

Survey data shows that 53.8 percent of teachers think they continuously examine their instructional practices to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and 21st-century learning expectations. Teachers use a variety of instructional practices, suggesting teacher awareness of the importance that core values, beliefs, and learning expectations hold, and they do incorporate the ideas behind them in their teaching. However, worksheets, traditional quizzes and tests, projects, and other work products show little explicit evidence of connections to core values, beliefs, and 21st-century learning expectations. In addition to addressing the learning expectations, the administration requires teachers to create student learning objectives (SLOs) as part of their growth plan each year. However, samples provided showed inconsistencies in the use and evaluation of SLOs for purposes of improving instruction, and few appear to have explicit connections to the core values, beliefs, and 21st-century learning expectations.

The Professional Learning Communities Support System Plan states that provisional certificate holders, conditional certificate holders, and master certificate holders seeking renewal, receive a mentor, a teacher with three or more years of experience and who holds a valid Maine teaching certificate at the professional or master level. Teachers confirm that new teachers receive a mentor only if they hold provisional or conditional certificates, but not if they have teaching experience before arriving in the district.

MHS makes efforts to coordinate with the district's Strategic Plan and Vision with an assessment of these principles rooted in research performed by Dr. Robert J. Marzano, suggesting that clarity of purpose influences student achievement significantly. However, citing teachers limited efforts shown to make a continuous or consistent examination of instructional practices, any connections to the Strategic Plan appears to yield little support for instructional change. Thus, these ideals likely receive inconsistent or inaccurate application, suggesting that both teachers and students lack clarity of purpose in teaching and learning as related to the core values, beliefs about learning, and the school's Guiding Principles.

When teachers continuously examine instructional practices to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and 21st-century learning expectations, students will grow their understanding and achievement of Messalonskee High School's Guiding Principles.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 3 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Messalonskee High School's teachers sometimes use instructional practices that support the achievement of the school's Guiding Principles by personalizing instruction, engaging students in cross-disciplinary learning, and applying knowledge and skills to authentic tasks. Additionally, higher-level classes support the achievement of 21st-century learning expectations by engaging students as active and self-directed learners, emphasizing inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking. Teachers more universally involve students in learning by engaging students in self-assessment and reflection and integrating technology in instructional practices.

A variety of course offerings gives students personal choice in how they practice the 21st-century learning expectations. Alternative Education programs have both in-school and out-of-school tracks that focus on the individual needs of at-risk students. MHS provides students with opportunities for relevant and challenging learning to enhance their occupational, personal, and academic success while preparing them to meet the needs of the Maine workforce; these opportunities include attendance at Maine's Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, taking multiple dual enrollment, AP and online college courses, and to pursue personal interests through multiple and varied electives. This shows personalized education, but not necessarily personalized classroom instruction. For identified students, MHS achieves this objective through the use of Individualized Education Plans (IEP) and 504 Plans. The short duration of the Year-End Studies (YES) program provides students with limited opportunities for personalized instruction at the end of the school year. (Many constituencies have expressed interest in a possible expansion of the YES program.) According to survey results, 76.9 percent of teachers say that they personalize instruction to support students' achievement of the school's 21st-century learning expectations.

MHS recognized in the self-study that they have needs in the area of cross-disciplinary instruction. However, teachers reported using skills and content from other disciplines and within disciplines on a regular basis, especially in English, social studies, mathematics, and science. This was confirmed through multiple observations and discussions, both with students and staff. Surprisingly, students did not report many teachers actually using cross-disciplinary teaching, although, for some students, the YES program and most core classes provide opportunities to apply previous classroom knowledge that crosses disciplinary lines. It seems possible that students, as well as teachers, lack recognition that explicitly invoking previous knowledge from other courses can be seen as cross-disciplinary learning. As evidence of this possible student misperception, the self-study mentions several cross-disciplinary assignments given in a number of classes. For example, world language classes study elements of art, social studies, and history in the target languages. Computer science students combine mathematics and art skills in learning how to use computer languages to build simple video games, as well as still and moving images. All classes teach reading and writing skills connected with the discipline's content. English and social studies classes tend to blend elements of other disciplines such as English classes writing a persuasive essay in which they take one side of a historical debate. Social studies classes may read a novel such as Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* and then discuss the historical and social impact of such works on American culture. Unfortunately, the school's schedule does not lend itself to cross-disciplinary team teaching.

Dual enrollment and online courses prove inherently more challenging and seem to place the greatest demands on students to direct and take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers tend to allow more choice in topics of study, and the process for finding and developing material to study. While teachers tend to define the types of projects and products for students to create, they do allow students to shape those products and to reshape the assignments to meet their personal interests. Students offered no samples of self-directed learning when asked about instruction, other than upperclassmen doing independent study. However, students appear to have the same limited understanding of self-direction as appeared around cross-disciplinary learning cited earlier. Nearly all online courses appear self-directed in terms of timing, although students make less use of opportunities to adjust content. Curricular offerings such as Advanced Placement (AP) courses offer a variety of more demanding opportunities for students to modify learning to meet their own interests and styles, as well as to select demanding content.

Elective courses in science, social studies, and world languages demonstrate the most authentic learning tasks, but most basic-level courses like biology, English, and math appear content-driven and fall low on the Bloom/Marzano taxonomy complexity scale. Lower-level courses appear worksheet, vocabulary, and content-driven, without much engagement of higher-order thinking skills, inquiry, and authentic learning. These observations suggest that a split in task complexity exists between lower- and upper-level classes. Forensics offers a good example of authentic and fun learning experiences that students can apply to the real world. Civics classes also have an authentic unit that asks them to problem solve school and community issues and to propose solutions that they can take to the leadership team and administration. The Journalism class sends students into the school community to conduct in-person interviews. Survey results seem somewhat to challenge these observations, however, because only 49.9 percent of students report that they can apply their learnings outside the classroom.

According to survey data, 69 percent of teachers emphasize inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking to support the achievement of the school's learning expectations, and 77 percent of parents agree with that claim. In Forensics, students apply their knowledge of the course content to analyze a crime scene in an attempt to solve the case that has been outlined. In art class, teachers provided students with an open-ended project in which they must make decisions on the product they will create, how they will create it, and then how they will form a plan of completion.

Teachers report that most of their formative and summative assessments do not include student self-assessment and reflective practice on a regular basis. The provided student work samples appeared to have no self-assessment components or reflection. When asked, students confirmed that teachers do not ask regularly that they reflect on or assess their own work; however, several of the documents provided in the self-study portal clearly show teachers asking students to self-assess, and the survey shows that 70.2 percent of students report that teachers provide them with opportunities to self-assess. For example, teachers provide learning checks and exit slips in order to allow students to self-assess and improve their learning and performance on work products. Thus, these apparent contradictions suggest room for improvement in student clarity regarding the nature and purpose of self-assessment.

Teachers in many departments integrate technology to provide students with learning objectives and course outlines. Additionally, the science classes use 3D printers; mathematics integrates the use of either TI-Nspire calculators or TI-84, DESMOS; the English department sends documents to students using Google Docs needed to start and complete projects. Individually, within departments, teachers use document readers, Kahoot, Quizlet, Google Classroom, and Moodle to enhance student learning. School-wide, teachers use EdYOUshed to tag students for Guided Study. Some teachers use Google Forms to personalize instruction and occasionally for students to engage in self-assessment. All teachers have Apple TV available for use in their classes.

When teachers' instructional practices support all MHS students by personalizing instruction; engaging students in cross-disciplinary learning; 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; and integrating technology, students will achieve greater accomplishment of Messalonskee High School's 21st-century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students

- Endicott survey

Standard 3 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Teachers at Messalonskee High School (MHS) sometimes 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; and providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom.

In some math, science, and social studies classes, teachers collect homework assignments and worksheets before asking students to complete assessment tasks. Teachers assign review sheets before a test as well, but appear to use neither homework nor review sheets to assess student readiness for the assessment. However, observations during some lessons revealed that, as teachers modeled concepts and provided practice time, they used movement about the classroom to observe the formative work of the students and provided immediate feedback to guide the students in their practice, and thus to prepare them for practice or assessments.

Differentiation of student work within a class is not always apparent and thus not clearly strategic, although it does appear in some instances. Observations, for example, in the physical education department illustrate some differentiation since one teacher, through his observation of student work and behavior, adjusted the requirements for use of specific equipment to meet student needs. Only 32.8 percent of students believe that teachers personalize their instruction, differentiating to meet their personal needs. The following illustrates this shortcoming: while many teachers use formative assessments, they appear to assess all students in a class through the use of the same formative assessments and do not regularly adjust instructional methods or content to facilitate reteaching.

Some teachers use certain instructional practices in the following fields: science - lecture, notes, group work; history - reading and lectures - math: model, practice, and notes; English/literature/composition - peer analysis, reading, lectures, some discussions. The vast majority of observed instructional practices focus on individual learning, while fewer practices use group-learning activities like labs, discussions, and group work.

MHS has tailored the Alternative Education program to specific student needs within the classroom, and classroom observations provided evidence of choice on various assessments. For example, teachers in the physical education department adjust the usage of equipment based on the students' physical capabilities, after they observe and interact verbally with students as they use the equipment. Teachers attempt to provide one-on-one support during class when appropriate by moving about the room as students perform tasks. If students need additional help, they must seek that help on their own time or get "tagged." Students report that teachers tag students in need regularly if they do not approach the teacher for help.

When Messalonskee High School 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; and providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom, such practices will encourage students to become active participants in the learning process, will promote stronger relationships among teachers and students, and will impact student motivation and achievement positively.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- teachers

- students

Standard 3 Indicator 4

Conclusions

Most teachers, individually, improve their instructional practices by sometimes 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; and engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice.

Seventy percent of teachers state they improve their teaching practices by using data collected from formative and summative assessments. This includes the daily use, for example, of exit slips, student surveys, and warm-up activities. Weekly assessments include homework, quizzes, tests, projects, and writing assignments. Individual teachers use the information collected to adjust work schedules for classes and to determine the need for reteaching material, especially in adjusting teaching methods to meet student learning styles, when techniques used previously failed to achieve student understanding. Still, observations and conversations with teachers and students suggest that room remains to improve the use of assessments to inform instructional practice.

According to survey data, most teachers do not agree (34.6 percent disagree, 28.8 percent remain undecided) with the statement, “Teachers have formal opportunities to examine student work to improve their instructional practices,” since the schedule contains little time to allow collaborative examination of student work. This suggests that while teachers informally examine student assessments to inform instructional practice on an individual basis, teachers lack collaborative opportunities to do so. The math department stated, for example, that they use the NWEA results essentially to map growth after using scores to place first-year students in their prospective math classes. They do not, however, examine the data to adjust instruction. In the parent meeting, both parents and teachers indicated uncertainty as to how MHS uses standardized test results.

Only 45.9 percent of students agree that their teachers ask for their ideas and opinions in order to improve their instructional practice and to make learning more exciting and interesting; about 30.6 percent of students disagree with this. However, students and teachers interviewed, report that teachers regularly ask for and use student feedback to adjust instruction, the timing of assessments, and types of assessments. Students reported that they feel comfortable giving such feedback and report that teachers respond well when they supply the feedback. Observation of a math class illustrated this when students expressed confusion and the need for more time to practice the skills taught. The teacher granted extended time and changed teaching tactics to help students understand the concept.

Other feedback happens at the beginning of the year, as well as throughout the school year, in the form of surveys, exit slips, and verbal correspondence. This suggests that either the Endicott survey did not capture an accurate picture, or that students and teachers interviewed had a misperception of their interactions, resulting in a lack of awareness needed to recognize the adjustments that teachers make. Survey results also indicate that only 17.3 percent of parents agree that their children's teachers ask them for feedback about their instructional practices. This suggests room for improvement in parent-teacher communication.

The science department reports open collaboration among teachers and the sharing of feedback, resources, and practices. This also appears to be the case in math, through sharing materials, and formative and summative assessment tools. Regular collaborative review of current research concerning content instructional practices appears in some content areas but has not developed in all disciplines. One particular example appears in science where teachers and administrators have identified the need to update standards and practices based on the newly adopted Next Generation Science Standards but that work has not begun.

The formal teacher evaluation plan uses iObservation and requires teachers to create and submit a growth plan each year. Administrators review this, provide feedback, make classroom observations, and provide a final evaluation at the end of the year. No clear evidence exists to suggest that writing, reviewing and offering feedback on these plans play a defined role in helping teachers to develop their skills. Yet, with the system in place and conversations having begun, better awareness of district expectations and teachers' willingness to participate, suggests that growth has begun in this area.

Regional School Unit 18 (RSU 18) has a clearly defined Strategic Plan and Vision. MHS explores current research, starting from Robert J. Marzano's *Art and Science of Teaching*, connecting and building study to the concepts and principles of his work. RSU 18 and MHS have built professional development and the Guiding Principles on Marzano's research and the principles that he defined from that work. MHS has not limited their study to Marzano's work only but owes a lot to Carol Dwek and Arthur Costa as well.

The foundation for professional discourse on instructional practice has its foundation in Marzano's principles. Once teachers identify focus areas and related, specific goals, conversations begin around improving professional practices, with the ultimate goal of developing professional and student growth plans. Using Marzano's framework, teachers develop and revise individual teaching practices before creating their annual, personal growth plans. Teachers then develop student learning objectives (SLOs) as part of that yearly planning.

When all teachers at Messalonskee High School, 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; and engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice, students will receive more complete feedback, enabling them to improve their attainment of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- parents
- Endicott survey

Standard 3 Indicator 5

Conclusions

Across Messalonskee High School (MHS), teachers as adult learners and reflective practitioners, by district design and through personal investment, maintain expertise in content areas and content-specific instructional practices with few exceptions.

Regional School Unit 18 (RSU 18) requires teachers to earn a master's degree within ten years of their date of hire. The district will pay for up to twelve credits per year, with added funding available for specific courses or degree programs. Current faculty have enrolled in masters and doctoral programs at a number of nearby schools. Some science teachers have experience in their discipline due to previous employment and other experiences outside of education. MHS has provided limited content-specific professional development (PD) during the last few years due to a focus on the self-study, and teachers report that content-specific PD has not happened regularly outside of what might be required for master's degree work, with the exception of some Advanced Placement (AP) training courses.

MHS did change professional development procedures for the current year in order to allow departments greater latitude in creating their own content-specific professional development. This may address the concerns expressed in the self-study and by some faculty members during the visit. Also, recertification practices in the district support teachers' individual academic work, collaborative projects, and committee work. In addition to those continuing their education through these means, the district makes a consistent effort to provide a variety of professional development experiences through faculty meetings, half-day and full-day workshops which include topics such as Response to Intervention, development of professional growth plans, and creating student learning objectives (SLOs).

Since teachers, as adult learners, are expected to earn advanced degrees, they hone their abilities in their content areas and become expert educators. Teachers who earn an advanced degree, or multiple degrees in some instances, show a deep level of understanding and commitment to their profession and academic disciplines, allowing them to modify curricular goals, adjust teaching methods, increase and further develop reflective practices, and enter leadership positions with the intent to enact desired system-wide changes in educational practice.

Since Messalonskee High School teachers as adult learners and reflective practitioners, by district design and through personal investment, maintain expertise in content areas and content-specific instructional practices, with few exceptions, MHS provides consistently high-quality instruction for its students.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- students
- parents

Standard 3 Commendations

Commendation

The ability of teachers to capture and implement the spirit and essence of Messalonskee High School's core values, beliefs about learning, and 21st century learning expectations in their instructional practices

Commendation

The extensive integration of technology in varied ways across curricular and instructional practices at MHS

Commendation

The varied and skilled use of instructional practices representing sound pedagogical knowledge and application

Commendation

The creative collaboration among some disciplines to improve instructional practice using feedback from varied sources

Commendation

The district's financial support of teachers in earning at least one master's degree

Standard 3 Recommendations

Recommendation

Identify and clarify cross-disciplinary knowledge and opportunities for students and staff

Recommendation

Assist all students in developing self-assessment skills

Recommendation

Strengthen the use of student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments to improve instructional practices

Recommendation

Provide opportunities for cross-disciplinary peer observation and planning

Recommendation

Ensure adequate time for departmental professional discourse concerning instructional practices and common assessments

Recommendation

Provide professional development to support instructional practices explicitly linked with the core values, beliefs about learning, and 21st century learning expectations

Recommendation

Provide strengthened support for all new employees in the district

Standard 4 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The professional staff of Messalonskee High School (MHS) continuously employs a formal process to assess whole-school and individual student progress based on specific and measurable criteria for success such as content-specific rubrics but continues to work toward assessing achievement of the school's 21st-century learning expectations using a school-wide rubric.

In 2017-2018 the full faculty adopted a set of Messalonskee High School Guiding Principles in order to inform and guide students' progress in areas of communication, independent learning, creative problem solving, responsibility, and integrative thinking. MHS has begun the process of assessing students in these areas. Humanities teachers assess student work according to the "Clear and Effective Communicator" standard attached to their reading and writing content rubrics. Science teachers utilize a common lab report rubric that integrates elements of the "Integrative and Informed Thinker" standard. Teachers continue to implement the Guiding Principles rubrics as assessment tools relevant to their disciplines. This remains a work in progress since teachers must observe these Guiding Principles on an individual basis and not all teachers have implemented the use of these measures. A majority of students at MHS claim awareness of the content listed in the school's Guiding Principles and the accompanying rubric; according to the survey, 73 percent of students assert familiarity with the school's Guiding Principles and approximately 80 percent indicate that they understand the criteria that teachers use to assess assignments and other classwork.

While the professional staff of MHS continually employ a formal process to assess whole-school and individual student progress based on specific and measurable criteria for success such as content-specific rubrics, not all students are assured opportunities for achieving the school's 21st-century learning expectations since the implementation of school-wide rubrics remains a work in progress.

Sources of Evidence

- teacher interview
- students
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Messalonskee High School's professional staff communicates individual student progress toward achieving the school's 21st-century learning expectations as the MHS Guiding Principles to students and their parents/guardians, but do not communicate progress toward achievement of these Guiding Principles to the larger community.

Teachers report individual student grades and proficiency in the school's Guiding Principles through 24-hour access to PowerSchool. Four times per year, teachers attach indicators of progress toward achieving the Guiding Principles to student report cards. Although staff members have not yet established a consistent, formal process for assessing and communicating progress to all students and families, they do conduct "Grades, Attendance and Behavior" (GAB) weeks once a month and advisors monitor their advisees' progress in these areas. If teachers have specific concerns about student progress, they will arrange meetings to discuss an individual plan for success. Messalonskee High School reports consistently progress and proficiency of student achievement of content standards to students and families.

Since MHS has yet to adopt and implement a formal structure for assessing and communicating school-wide achievement of the Guiding Principles, the larger school community does not receive a summative assessment of progress made as an entire school toward success in accomplishing the Guiding Principles. When MHS fully communicates the school's progress toward achieving the Guiding Principles to the larger community, students' successes will become more apparent and students will better understand those areas in which they require more work and progress.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- central office personnel
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 3

Conclusions

In some content areas, professional educators at Messalonskee High School (MHS) collect, disaggregate, and analyze some data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement, with teachers responding to inequities in varied ways, depending on the needs of individual students.

Feedback from Messalonskee Middle School teachers helps to identify students with challenging attendance records. Some content-specific learning areas have made adjustments to the curriculum as a result of data analysis. The English faculty developed a freshman, full-year English program to support those students who need to strengthen reading and writing skills. Since adopting the Maine Common Core, teachers of the full-year English program began to provide instruction specific to reading informational texts. The social studies department recently developed a review of student achievement to support students struggling to cope with traditional social studies courses and their concepts.

MHS uses North-Western Evaluation Association (NWEA) scores to determine proper placement in full-year English and mathematics courses. Special education staff also review and use individual NWEA scores to differentiate mathematics instruction. MHS does administer the NWEA assessment to all ninth graders in the fall as well as the spring in their math and English classes only. Teachers have awareness of the Guiding Principles and have the autonomy to recognize an individual student's proficiency in a Guiding Principle through the use of a rubric and reporting on PowerSchool. However, professional staff have not yet developed a consistent practice or integrated plan to assess the Guiding Principles.

Administration and guidance staff meet weekly to review individual student academic progress, identify at-risk students through assessments of attendance, grades, and behavioral/social performance, create educational support plans and adjust classes, course loads and schedules accordingly. In addition, the Alternative Education faculty and staff meet regularly for the same reason. Faculty and staff in the learning center collaborate with classroom teachers to support those students assigned to supervised study halls. Teachers "tag" students during "Tag Time," using the EdYouSched software program to meet for additional support and to monitor progress in Guided Study. Teachers have the option to share NWEA scores with students and their families for long-range planning. While most intervention efforts to combat inequities in student achievement address the specific needs of struggling students, MHS offers nine dual enrollment courses and ten Advanced Placement courses to adjust the course choices of students wishing to accelerate their academic programs. School counselors refer to transcripts when recommending students for these courses and initially offer them to high achieving students; recently, MHS has made these courses available to a more academically diverse population of students.

Because the professional staff at MHS collect, disaggregate, and analyze data to identify and respond to student inequities, Messalonskee High School meets most students' individual educational needs.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- parents
- department leaders
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 4

Conclusions

Prior to each unit of study, Messalonskee High School (MHS) administrators expect faculty to communicate to students the school's applicable unit-specific learning goals associated; however, presenting the information about the school's 21st-century learning expectations in the form of the MHS Guiding Principles addressed in the unit remains a work in progress.

MHS recently adopted a list of Guiding Principles which reflect the 21st-century learning expectations at the school, and the teachers have begun to communicate the applicable Guiding Principles to students. Although not all teachers have made them explicit, the Guiding Principles have become a more organic part of the school community. Teachers have become aware of MHS's Guiding Principles and convey their importance on an as-needed basis, although without scoring them on a rubric or consistently sharing the explicit Guiding Principles with their students. Teachers attach content-specific learning goals to assignments on PowerSchool, posting them on their walls, sharing them in course-expectations handouts, and sharing them on classroom websites and Google Docs. MHS has posted the Guiding Principles on the school website, in the student handbook, and in PowerSchool.

When all teachers communicate consistently the expectations concerning the Guiding Principles and learning goals for each unit, students will acquire more ownership of their learning and will have a better understanding of their progress toward achieving Messalonskee High School's Guiding Principles.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- students
- department leaders

Standard 4 Indicator 5

Conclusions

Prior to summative assessments, teachers often provide students with rubrics and scoring guides to communicate expectations for specific content standards.

Teachers provide learning goals and objectives to students for unit lessons and provide students with opportunities to practice and receive feedback on specific measurable goals prior to summative assessments. Teachers often use rubrics, checklists, and scoring guides to communicate expectations in projects, essays, and other creative products. In survey data, 76.1 percent of students agree that MHS teachers regularly use rubrics to assess student work. A majority of students (82.7 percent) assert that they understand in advance the work they need to accomplish to meet teacher expectations, and 70.6 percent of students indicate that they understand the rubrics that their teachers use. Teachers communicate targeted content standards for each course to the community through course descriptions on the MHS website. Most teachers communicate to students and parents the specific assessment criteria for each unit, using the content standards attached to each assignment through PowerSchool.

Since most teachers provide students with specific and measurable criteria for success prior to summative assessments, students achieve higher levels of success in meeting specific assessment criteria in their course work.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- students
- parents
- Endicott survey

Standard 4 Indicator 6

Conclusions

In each unit of study, teachers employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments.

At Messalonskee High School (MHS), teachers provide a diverse array of formative and summative assessments to check for student understanding. Informal formative assessment instruments include Kahoot, Jeopardy, hand signals, quizlets, and direct questioning. Teachers regularly employ graded formative assessments, such as quizzes, exit slips, warmups, IXL, and review sheets. Methods vary according to the content area, and some may indicate progress toward working together through practicing cooperative learning skills, but all teachers use tools that check for immediate understanding. Thus, teachers and students know immediately if learning has occurred.

Messalonskee High School teachers use a wide variety of summative assessment tools in all content areas. The students demonstrate proficiency in content standards through a variety of media including performances, posters, websites, photo essays, presentations, videos, and traditional pencil-and-paper tests. Students in Advanced Geometry create study review books to demonstrate their understanding of theorems, vocabulary, and diagrams relating to circles. Students in a physics class mathematically determine where a projectile will land and then test their predictions in a lab setting. AP Biology students create phylogenetic trees using genetic data along with anatomical similarities to show an understanding of evolutionary relatedness. AP Statistics students design a study and collect raw data, run statistical analyses and draw conclusions based on their data. In English-language art's Media Literacy and Film Analysis class, students create research-based websites to highlight media-related topics. In Advanced Placement (AP) Language and Composition, students create photo essays depicting complex arguments; they then use rhetorical strategies, revise images, and craft critiques of each other's photo essays.

Due to the wide variety of assessments used, teachers have become more skilled and attentive to collecting data that demonstrates the level of learning success that students achieve. These results help students to achieve better awareness of their knowledge of course content and development of the skills needed to use the content learned. As teachers expand their repertoire of assessments, they expand the level of authenticity that students can apply to the assignments completed. Thus, student achievement goes beyond academic learning to applied life skills.

Interdisciplinary learning has become a growth area at MHS in which data collection and application has begun to yield results. Although this style of learning remains worthy of further attention and development at MHS, some departments have expanded curricular offerings that allow students to meet more demands for applied knowledge and skills that reach across disciplinary borders, thus expanding student aptitudes.

Since in each unit of study, Messalonskee High School teachers employ a wide variety of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments, students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate academic success and teachers collect data to allow adjustment of curriculum and instruction as needed.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- students
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 7

Conclusions

Messalonskee High School (MSH) teachers collaborate occasionally in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments.

Content leaders meet bi-weekly with the building principal to discuss curriculum concerns and report potential changes needed as discussed within departments. Leaders then report back to their specific departments. Prior to the evaluation visit, faculty and department meetings focused on preparing for the upcoming re-accreditation and therefore limited work on other areas. However, MHS has designed the 2019-2020 schedule to accommodate department meetings in which each department will design its own professional development plan involving curriculum, assessments, and student achievement. The current schedule does not contain common planning time; however, some content specific teachers meet during their lunches or off-site to address concerns in their classrooms and to discuss curricular and assessment issues.

In the English department, when two or more teachers teach the same course, they share common course materials and assessments. The English department met during the summer of 2018 to revise course content and plan common assessments for shared courses. Science teachers share common course materials, labs, and assessments. Due to limitations of time to collaborate during regular school hours, some departments meet several times during the summer to discuss the curriculum for the upcoming school year. Teachers in many content areas share materials across disciplines using technology. During the summer of 2019, the math department met to review curriculum and assessments, and adjusted curriculum and assessments based on the criteria developed during those meetings.

When more consistent, dedicated opportunities to collaborate on the creation and revision of formative, summative and common assessments exist, Messalonskee High School will ensure more student success in achieving the school's 21st-century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 4 Indicator 8

Conclusions

Teachers at Messalonskee High School (MHS) regularly provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback and provide students ample opportunities to revise or improve their work.

Teachers provide verbal and written feedback on drafts and other assignments to encourage students to meet the course standards through successful completion of summative assessments such as unit tests, oral presentations, written essays, and final projects. "Tag Time" has become instrumental in providing individualized conferencing and feedback. When working on longer projects with multiple drafts, teachers use written feedback, annotations and active reading notes.

Many courses offer test and quiz retakes as options for students and often require a conference and re-teaching, as necessary, before a retake may occur. When evaluating a final assessment, teachers may use either department-wide or individual course scoring guides or rubrics to provide feedback on how well students have met standards attached to the assignment. Teachers often provide comments directly on written assignments or submit digital comments when students submit work online. Students assert that teachers at MHS typically give timely and corrective verbal feedback to students during class, whole-class discussions, Socratic seminars, individual activities, and group work. Survey results indicate that 68 percent of parents believe that MHS teachers provide timely and corrective feedback to assist students in revising and improving assignments, and nearly 70 percent of students indicate that teachers correct work and offer suggestions for improvement.

Teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback that allows students to improve their skills and work products effectively and efficiently.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- students
- parents

Standard 4 Indicator 9

Conclusions

Teachers in all learning areas frequently use formative assessments to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning.

The self-study indicates that Messalonskee High School (MHS) staff members clearly understand the importance of adapting instruction based on students' understanding. Students have a number of opportunities to demonstrate their acquired skills and knowledge through a sampling of their work, with formative assessments used to evaluate student learning. Teacher interviews and the self-study indicate that MHS teachers use formative assessments and their results to inform their instruction, and faculty make regular adjustments to the planning and delivery of classes to meet student needs. Thus, MHS has instituted a variety of formative assessments to review student achievement and to ensure that students remain the focus of teaching and learning.

Teachers typically use formative assessments on a daily basis to assess student understanding; such assessments include error analysis of daily work, question and answer discussions, active-reading note checks, exit slips, practice problems, and homework. Teachers check for understanding on a weekly basis by using vocabulary quizzes, labs, rough drafts of writing assignments, short quizzes, and graded annotations. These formative assessments guide teachers in gauging student understanding of the content and skills taught, as well as by informing plans to re-teach or adjust the curriculum to meet student needs. Once students receive feedback from teachers, they have opportunities to revise and/or retake assessments.

Teachers have used their formative assessments to ensure that students examine and reflect upon their work. These assessments ensure that students have opportunities to examine their work in an effort to grow their knowledge and to improve their skills in applying that knowledge. Thus, the formative assessments used at MHS support improved learning through adjustments to teaching methodologies and for future lessons during the current year and for the years ahead.

Messalonskee High School's teachers frequently use student-centered formative assessments to inform and adapt their instruction that leads to improved student learning.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 4 Indicator 10

Conclusions

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 the following: student work, standardized assessments, data from sending schools, receiving schools, and post-secondary institutions; however, data does not drive changes to common course and grade-level assessments, nor does data from the Guiding Principles rubrics appear instrumental in improving instructional practices, nor do formal instruments exist to survey current students and alumni.

A variety of formative assessments drives changes in instructional practice and curriculum. Teachers, often with the direction of the content leaders, examine data from student work, and course and grade-level assessments, to determine adjustments needed in course design and instructional methods. Many content areas share resources and some administer common assessments. Northwest Education Association (NWEA) scores and data from sending schools help determine course placement for students.

When MHS phased out the "Habits of Mind" and replaced them with the Guiding Principles in order to meet state graduation requirements and to simplify student expectations, MHS formed a Guiding Principles committee, consisting of teachers and the principal during the 2016-2017 school year. The committee created a school-wide rubric with which to score student growth and achievement of the MHS Guiding Principles and made it available to teachers on the school's Teaching Resources website. Teachers sometimes score the MHS Guiding Principles as they relate to coursework and assignments. The rubric, however, is not widely used as a formal assessment tool.

MHS uses a number of standardized assessments including NWEA data, Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, and common assessments developed by the content departments. Data from these assessments supports departmental efforts to revise curriculum and adjust teaching strategies.

MHS does collect data from sending schools, receiving schools, and some information from post-secondary schools, although no formal instrument exists to collect and assess data from alumni. The MHS guidance department maintains contact with and reviews data from post-secondary institutions, such as Kennebec Valley Community College (KVCC) and the University of Maine. Graduation standards have been updated recently to match state requirements, but no formal plan exists to use data collected from content standards and the Guiding Principles assessments to affect earning a high school diploma.

When MHS faculty and administrators collaboratively examine and analyze data from various assessments, the curriculum and instructional practice will become more valuable and relevant to the students, ensuring student achievement of Messalonskee High School's 21st-century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership

Standard 4 Indicator 11

Conclusions

Messalonskee High School reviews and revises periodically its grading and reporting practices to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning and to meet the needs of faculty, students, and the community.

The Messalonskee High School Student Handbook describes the principles of MHS's grading system and explains the grading process. Teachers assess students on a traditional 100-point grading scale, in addition to a standards-referenced, four-point system. Survey results indicate that 68.8 percent of parents agree that teachers' grading practices align with the school's beliefs about learning. Individual teachers review and revise their grading and reporting practices periodically in an effort to align with the school's core values and beliefs about learning.

Administration consistently reviews grade reports and failure lists to determine eligibility for participation in sports, extracurricular activities and senior privileges. MHS has ultimate goals to incorporate a whole-school process through full implementation of school-wide rubrics to assess student achievement of the school's 21st-century learning expectations, expecting that through these procedures students will become more responsible for monitoring their own academic progress, and that school procedures will assure parents of procedures to engage fully in their children's education.

As Messalonskee High School reviews and revises grading and reporting practices periodically to ensure alignment with the school's core values, beliefs about learning, including full implementation of its school-wide rubrics to assess success in achieving the Guiding Principles, MHS assessment procedures will steer students toward greater understanding and accomplishment of the school's 21st century learning expectations in the form of the Guiding Principles.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 4 Commendations

Commendation

The collaboration among educators to use Northwest Education Association (NWEA) scores and sending school data for student placement

Commendation

The use of Tag Time and Guided Study as immediate interventions to improve student learning

Commendation

The administration's use of weekly meetings with counselors to review academic success

Commendation

The wide range of formative and summative assessments used to measure student progress

Commendation

The many opportunities for revision and improvement of student work

Standard 4 Recommendations

Recommendation

Create and implement a plan to use the Guiding Principles rubrics to assess student achievement, to communicate expectations to students, and to inform the school community

Recommendation

Create and implement a plan for regular teacher collaboration around issues of teaching, learning, and assessment

Recommendation

Develop common assessments in all curricular areas

Recommendation

Build and implement a formal instrument to collect and assess data from alumni

Recommendation

Evaluate data to ensure appropriate adjustment of graduation requirements

Standard 5 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The Messalonskee High School (MHS) community consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture, in the great majority of circumstances that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all.

MHS works continually toward building a safe and respectful school culture. According to survey results, 72.5 percent of students feel safe at school. The student handbook, an electronic document that school community members may access online, provides students and parents with clear expectations in relation to discipline and attendance policies. To support the daily implementation of school culture protocols, the school employs a full-time resource officer and two assistant principals who split responsibility for the four classes. Students overall believe that MHS provides a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture.

Students and teachers alike believe that their school provides a safe environment. Students had identified "the portables" as the only emotionally uncomfortable physical site on the campus; removal of these structures eliminated that issue concerning the facility. MHS has safety protocols and procedures in place for most possible emergencies. Some students expressed confusion about what to do in the event of a lockdown when in certain common areas of the building. Otherwise, students feel safe and comfortable in all locations throughout the day.

Survey results show that 30.9 percent of students denied that bullying poses a problem in their school, while 32.6 percent feel that bullying does create issues for students. Prior to receiving the survey results, the school had created an anti-harassment committee in order to address this and other potential issues in the social climate at MHS. The senior mentor program has become another way through which the school addresses climate and culture through matching senior mentors with freshmen for Wednesday advisory meetings. The senior mentors strive to build meaningful connections and to create a welcoming, secure environment for younger students.

Hallway interactions appear positive: teachers show friendly attitudes toward students, and students have a positive outlook on their school community, asserting that the school meets their needs for comfort and security. The various clubs that the school offers, and the possibility of starting new clubs, gives students a significant voice in building a culture of respect and support. The lunchtime music series in the media center invites all students to perform and enjoy student-selected music. The school community consistently displays pride in their students and the larger community by displaying student artwork, media releases, announcements, and other student work in hallways, the library, offices, and classrooms. Students also display pride in their school. During spirit week for homecoming, students participate in various activities such as a hallway decoration contest, a parade, dress-up days, and team recognition to show support of their school. Survey results identified 52.9 percent of students at Messalonskee High School who feel pride in their school.

Since Messalonskee High School consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture in the great majority of circumstances that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all, MHS empowers its students to become a partner in their educational process.

Sources of Evidence

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

- students
- parents
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Endicott survey

Standard 5 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Messalonskee High School (MHS) strives to be equitable and inclusive, ensuring access to challenging academic experiences for all students, making certain that courses throughout the curriculum are populated with students reflecting the diversity of the student body, fostering heterogeneity, and supporting the achievement of the school's 21st-century learning expectations.

The school's mission statement expresses MHS's desire to foster critical thinking, effective communication, and creative problem-solving in order to support the achievement of the school's 21st-century learning expectations. Students have a wide variety of classes and programs from which to choose, including but not limited to vocational and alternative education, Advanced Placement (AP) and dual enrollment courses. The variety of courses offered ensures access to a challenging educational experience for all students. MHS ensures each student an annual say in the program of study he or she will take, and then builds the schedule to meet student choice. Students, following recommendations from counselors, teachers, and advisors, choose courses based on abilities, strengths, and interests.

Special education students receive additional recommendations when choosing appropriate course levels. MHS makes special education support available across content areas. Students with significant disabilities, including those in the functional life skills program, may enroll in elective classes as well as in courses required for graduation. Most courses offer inclusion, with survey results indicating that 79.1 percent of students believe that they have a number of opportunities to take courses in which students of varying ability levels enroll. Each year, all students have required learning experiences in English, math, science, and social studies. Throughout their high school experiences, students also must take one year of fine art, half a credit in Jobs for Maine's Graduates (JMG), health, and 1.5 credits of physical education.

All learners may pursue multiple pathways inside and outside of the classroom to achieve their goals, and learning may take place without the artificial boundaries of a traditional academic classroom. The student body participates in online classes, attend Mid-Maine Technical Center (MMTC), Advanced Placement courses, dual enrollment classes with Kennebec Valley Community College, Thomas College, and some qualified students may attend classes at Colby College. All of these offerings allow 75 percent of staff to assert that the school is equitable and inclusive, ensuring access to challenging and appealing learning experiences for all students, and ensuring that courses throughout the curriculum are populated with students reflecting the diversity of the student body. Also, through access for students and staff to 1:1 technology using MacBook Air laptop computers, the connections and learning opportunities in and out of class happen on a variety of platforms.

Since Messalonskee High School is equitable and inclusive, ensuring access to challenging academic experiences for all students, making certain that courses throughout the curriculum are populated with students reflecting the diversity of the student body, fostering heterogeneity, students receive equitable access to educational programs and substantial support in achieving the school's 21st-century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- student shadowing
- students
- Endicott survey
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Messalonskee High School has a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to a school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st-century learning expectations.

The advisory period provides each student with an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who grows to know the student well. Students meet with their advisors for seven minutes each morning between periods 1 and 2 to listen to announcements, participate in grade-level activities, and connect with their advisors through a daily check-in. Students also may spend a thirty-minute period (known variously as Tag Time or Guided Study) with either their homeroom advisor or a classroom teacher from whom they need extra help. For the most part, students stay with the same advisor for all four years of high school. Some students indicate that, based on program choices that take them off the MHS campus, they may not have full access to the advisory program.

MHS dedicates one week per month to GAB week when advisors check on the grades, attendance, and behavior of each student in their homerooms. Students may eat lunch in a classroom with a teacher of their choosing. In addition, multiple teachers assert meeting of a school-wide goal for each adult to have a meaningful and personalized 30-second conversation each day with a different student to enhance student-adult relationships within the school community.

Survey data indicate that 57.9 percent of students “strongly agree/agree” that their school has a program that provides them with an adult in the school with whom they meet regularly and who knows them well. Staff and parents also agree (59.6 percent and 61.9 percent, respectively) that a formal, ongoing program exists through which students have an adult in the school who knows them well and assists them in achieving the school's 21st-century learning expectations. This data may appear lower than the current feeling of students, parents, and faculty, as the Endicott survey was taken in a year that did not have a scheduled advisory period.

Because Messalonskee High School has a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to a school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st-century learning expectations, each student is supported and known well by multiple members of the school community, thus fostering a safe, positive, and supportive culture.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- students
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 4

Conclusions

In order to improve student learning through professional development, the Messalonskee High School principal and professional staff have some time set aside to engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning; use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices; dedicate formal time to implement professional development; and apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

MHS conducts five full professional development days each calendar year. Additional faculty meetings occur every other week. According to the self-study, this time allows discussions around Response to Intervention (RTI), concerns about attendance, preparing coursework, developing student learning objectives (SLOs), as well as the individual professional growth plans which teachers record in the iObservation software. The schedule allows departments to eat lunch together, providing added time for collaboration and discussion. Adoption of principles from Robert Marzano's work has become a major focus in the district's vision for education, and consequently in guiding the direction of teaching and learning at MHS.

Staff may attend a variety of workshops and conferences outside the school district with support from the district budget. The district budget allots funds each year to pay for academic courses as well. Still, this funding does have limits and, on rare occasions, the district declines some study requests. Teachers have attended the Maine Principals' Association annual conference both to attend and present workshops on topics appropriate to the development of teaching and learning at MHS. Content-area teachers have attended conferences sponsored by their appropriate professional organizations. The administration encourages teachers to explore and develop their personal interests, especially as they may relate to curricular offerings such as the YES program or developing new seminars in their departments.

Starting at the end of the 2018-2019 academic year, teachers collaborated within their departments to create a professional development plan for the 2019-2020 school year. Departments worked as units to create a timeline with concrete roles, and they will report on their progress toward their goals throughout the year. Faculty hold these discussions once a month at a faculty meeting. At the end of the last school year, administrators worked to review each plan and to provide meaningful feedback. Once a month, the district holds an early-release day and dedicates the release time to professional development.

The assistant superintendent in charge of curriculum asked the staff to complete a survey of their professional needs for the current school year. During the upcoming November and March full workshop days, the instructional coaches will work to implement the requested professional development. Also, building administration and special educators discuss professional development needs. On workshop days, the school offers three different workshops so teachers can self-select to meet their own needs. Teachers have expressed a desire for time to collaborate vertically with sending schools; however, the district has not yet set aside such time.

Since the principal and professional staff have some time set aside to engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning; use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices; dedicate formal time to implement professional development; and apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment, the professional staff engage in professional growth to improve student learning.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers

- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- school website

Standard 5 Indicator 5

Conclusions

School leaders at Messalonskee High School regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning.

The district approved a system of professional growth known as the Teacher and Professional Growth and Performance Evaluation Model (TPEG) designed around Robert J. Marzano's *The Art and Science of Teaching* instructional framework. The model requires teachers to create and implement an annual plan that includes professional goals to assess three areas: professional practice, professional growth, and student growth using a four-point rating scale (innovating, applying, developing, and ineffective). Supervisors use the iObservation platform to measure professional growth and practice. Teachers submit their annual goals focusing on two different elements from Marzano's domains with specific action steps toward growth. Supervisors assess teachers formally on the two elements of their choosing; however, they may receive informal feedback about other elements during the observation process as well.

Choosing two elements guides the nature of the observation when the administrator visits the classroom, allowing the administrator to focus on specific evidence for the targeted goals and to provide immediate feedback online. Supervising administrators attempt two to three observations per year, both scheduled formal observations and informal walk-throughs. Additionally, teachers submit a student learning objective (SLO), on which teachers measure student growth aligned with a specific content standard using pre- and post-assessment data. Teachers and supervisors identify key instructional strategies for measurement. Then, teachers collect and submit data to the supervising administrator once annually as a way to demonstrate teacher effectiveness in the classroom. Once a teacher has passed probationary status, he or she enters a three-year collaborative cycle. The principal supervises the first and second-year staff, and the assistant principals divide the remainder of the teaching staff. Year one demands a full review, year two requires a partial review, and then year three provides more of a check-in, assuming sufficient progress in development. In these three ways, administrators regularly maintain supervision and evaluation of classroom teachers in order to support and improve student learning.

Because school leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes, teachers collaborate with supervisors in building their own professional growth, and in turn, provide stronger support for student learning.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- school leadership

Standard 5 Indicator 6

Conclusions

The organization of time at Messalonskee High School supports research-based instruction, limited professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of most students.

When the staff at Messalonskee High School adopted the current 5x5 block schedule, classes lost 12 minutes per period. Staff members have begun an evaluation of this schedule to identify whether it provides the best fit for their instructional and professional needs, and have determined that they must perform more research before making a final decision about a schedule format. The schedule currently does not offer established time for professional collaboration among staff during the day, and MHS has not scheduled time for department meetings to take place after school. Teachers who share multiple-section courses have created time outside of class to develop common summative assessments. Nonetheless, the staff does feel that the administration supports their efforts to fulfill professional development needs within departments since MHS provides professional development days and financial support for professional development activities outside the district.

The organization of time does not always support the learning needs of all students in all academic areas. With the implementation of the 5x5 schedule, the reduction of 12 minutes per day per class has caused teachers to cut curriculum and units to fit the allotted time. Teachers expressed concern over increased time required to prepare for the added class section each day, and for students' increased need to complete more homework each night. Also, students who attend the Mid-Maine Technical Center (MMTC) have less access to the advisory tagging program and some extracurricular activities due to time lost in travel to their MMTC programs, in addition to the 12-minute cut in each class period.

Since Messalonskee High School affords some time within the daily schedule and some planned staff meeting agendas after school hours, including one faculty meeting per month dedicated to work on professional development plans, MHS's organization of time supports research-based instruction and allows some staff to collaborate in creating teaching and learning opportunities, so they can meet the learning needs of most students.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 7

Conclusions

The student load and class size at Messalonskee High School enable staff to meet the learning needs of most students.

Class sizes can vary depending on the nature of courses and the number of sections offered. Currently, the ratio of teachers to students at MHS allows most staff to meet appropriately the individual learning needs of most students, although some of the largest class sizes render it difficult to meet student needs. Efforts to expand the curriculum in order to support student needs and interests, adding programs such as Year End Studies (YES), Guided Study and the advisory program, assist classroom teachers in identifying student academic issues or needs. Still, these additions have placed more demands on staff with added preparations. The number of preparations assigned to each teacher varies according to the duration of classes, whether a partial or full-year course. Student satisfaction with the structure of the schedule depends on the multiple options provided to students to meet their individual learning interests. They cite opportunities like Alternative Education, Special Education, Life Skills, college dual-enrollment courses, online classes, student enrollment at Mid-Maine Technical Center (MMTC), and acceleration options in a given curriculum track through semester course offerings available to meet student curricular interests. The great majority of students express comfort with the programs available to them.

The staff consists of 51 teachers for 760 students, resulting in a 14:1 student-to-teacher ratio. Class sizes range from electives with 10:1 to some required courses with a 25:1 ratio. The class size does depend on the courses and the number of sections available in the schedule. According to survey data, 84.7 percent of the student body “strongly agree/agree” that class sizes are reasonable, compared to 55.7 percent of staff who believe that student load and class sizes enable them to meet the needs of individual students. With that, 67.3 percent of parents believe the number of students in their children's classes allows teachers to meet students' individual needs. MHS staff describe their assigned course load as manageable and note that the first semester seems heavier than the second, but could not cite a definitive cause.

Some reduction in student numbers has resulted in cuts to staffing in recent years. A number of alternative education programs, geared toward students who struggle in a large-class setting, supports those students in the mainstream curriculum. This has resulted in expanded offerings that place modestly increased demands on teacher loads. Programs such as the Jobs for Maine's Graduates (JMG) provide small class sizes, opportunities to prepare for career pathways after high school, and post-graduate learning for a year after high school.

Because the staff and administration consistently monitor and respond to course loads and student-to-teacher ratios in classes, teachers believe they can meet consistently the individual needs of the majority of students.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 5 Indicator 8

Conclusions

The principal, working with other building leaders at Messalonskee High School, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations.

According to survey outcomes, 71.2 percent of faculty agree that the principal and other school-based administrators provide instructional leadership rooted in the school's core values, while 47.3 percent of students surveyed agree that the principal clearly defines Messalonskee High School's expectations for student achievement. The leadership team consists of the principal, assistant principals, six staff and two students to develop procedures and guidelines for MHS. The school mission and vision drive the founding goals of this group "to distribute leadership and increase collaboration among all stakeholders," and makes every effort to serve as "a positive unifying force for the school community." This group meets every two weeks to stay informed of current issues in the building. Also, the principal consistently seeks feedback from the entire staff concerning new initiatives, scheduling, the effectiveness of professional development, and clarity of communication. The principal meets once each month with content leads to distribute information, solicit feedback and discuss content-level decisions. The content leads do not have consistent meetings with their departments, however, to ensure an adequate, two-way flow of information.

The principal and assistant principals monitor faculty growth and development through the Regional School Unit 18 (RSU) Teacher and Professional Growth and Performance Evaluation Model (TPEG) program. This includes both a three-year monitored growth plan for all new hires and a three-year directed growth plan for all continuing contracted faculty. To meet the demands of this program, teachers must complete competencies working on Marzano's standards throughout the year in their classroom, and developing a growth plan to certify growth on the standards documented each year in iObservation. During the year, the administrators typically observe each faculty member two or three times and communicate teacher progress on the identified standards through iObservation. Teachers also develop student learning objectives (SLO) as part of a student growth management tool.

Since the principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations, faculty tend consistently to implement curriculum and procedures founded on Messalonskee High School's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- Endicott survey

Standard 5 Indicator 9

Conclusions

Teachers, students, and parents at Messalonskee High School (MHS) are regularly involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership.

Since several staff members graduated from Messalonskee High School, they share significant pride in their school and community. These staff members supply significant models for all staff to build a powerful sense of belonging and pride within the MHS community. The school leadership team offers one example of this depth of involvement. Comprised of administrators, staff, and students who meet bi-weekly, they discuss issues, concerns, and the direction of school policies and procedures. Several clubs and groups provide places for students to voice leadership roles, and MHS welcomes all student suggestions for new groups or supports to meet student needs. The MHS student council allows student representation through their elected members to participate in the school decision-making process. One student council member also serves as one of the two students on the leadership team.

Several organizations provide parents with leadership roles in such groups as the athletic boosters who play significant roles in planning and construction of the new athletics complex, the music boosters supporting activities throughout the whole district and drama boosters who aid in theatrical productions. Parents can serve as class advisors and on many committees when asked. Parents started most boosters groups and continue to run most of these organizations. Parents also work in athletics to recognize student achievements in the greater community and receive ample communications from a variety of sources within the school. In addition to material and financial support for activities beyond the district budgetary support, these groups also fund scholarships to support student participants in these extracurricular areas.

An example of organic, student-driven leadership occurred in 2018 to deal with concerns over bullying. In response, the faculty designed an advisory activity with concerned students who took action through the use of a series of activities like the National Guard's Helping Everyone Achieve Respect (HEAR) program. Survey outcomes note the percentage of all students in "total agreement" with the statement, "Students have input in important decisions made at my school" was 41.4 percent, while only 29 percent indicate that they disagree with the statement, showing a degree of ownership. Teacher agreement with the same statement fell at 48.1 percent. Students feel no limit to their options and believe the administration supports them when they bring concerns forward.

Additionally, the number of student-initiated clubs such as the Outing Club, Volleyball Club, Anime and Gaming Club, Gold Ribbon Club, Jam Club, and student acapella groups, offers evidence of student involvement and ownership in the school community. Also, a student group brought forward a suggestion to build a greenhouse on campus. With faculty support, they raised funds for its construction and formed a successful Agriculture Club. The club donates produce from the garden to food services and the club obtained a grant to purchase growth towers to expand both productivity and awareness of expanded agricultural procedures.

By allowing staff, parents and community members to work with administrative support in targeted and defined decision-making roles, ownership and responsibility grow among members in the Messalonskee High School community.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- students
- Endicott survey

Standard 5 Indicator 10

Conclusions

Messalonskee High School teachers regularly exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increased student engagement in learning.

In addition to rolls on the leadership team, teachers also create and run student clubs, offer new courses to meet student interests, continue to build offerings for the spring Year End Studies (YES) program, and collaborate across the district to develop and grow standards for learning. Since Regional School Unit 18 (RSU18) supports advanced study in their disciplines and requires teachers to complete a master's degree within ten years of their hire date, teachers bring significant expertise to teaching and learning.

Teachers sponsor a number of clubs and other organizations that enhance the school environment and support student engagement in programs that extend beyond the curriculum and the walls of the building, supporting student learning in non-traditional ways. A few examples include Chess Club, Anime and Gaming Club, Bible Club, Poetry Out Loud, and the Civil Rights Team. These clubs allow students and teachers to meet on shared ground of common interests, encouraging mutual support that strengthens relationships inside the classroom, resulting in strengthened student-teacher relationships and improved academic achievement.

Five years ago, MHS changed the daily schedule to a five-period model to allow greater student voice and choice. This change prompted numerous teachers to come forward with proposals for new classes and seminars, for departments to rethink their curricular offerings, and to evaluate the overall student experience. Reaching students through their personal interests supports greater student engagement. Providing staff with the flexibility to propose and design classes demonstrates the district's strong support of teacher initiative in enhancing student learning.

For example, the English department has rewritten its entire course structure from traditional, grade-level offerings to interest-based offerings that continue to build sound English skills. The YES program, offered during the last few days of each school year, grew from a teacher initiative to the Leadership Team that the school board approved. Teachers create a variety of courses intended to meet student needs. Since these offerings address specific student interests, they enhance student engagement in the closing days of the school year when interest often wanes. The social studies department continually revises a series of seminars to meet interests, and, when student interests appear substantial enough, they develop these quarter-long courses into full-semester offerings that allow greater depth of learning. Having the flexibility to propose and design class offerings such as these demonstrates the strong degree of teacher initiative in building and supporting student learning.

When the State of Maine moved toward standards-based education, teachers worked collaboratively to build district standards and procedures for implementing them. Teachers some times worked with teachers from other districts to establish the foundation for the program and then to expand the framework to support student achievement of the standards. Beyond building the basic standards, teachers continued to grow academic offerings beyond the base curriculum, adjusting the curriculum to offer dual enrollment classes, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, as well as expanding the number of electives and seminars.

Through all of that change, administrators supported teachers' efforts to grow their own skills in support of the new curricular offerings that they had created. Inspired by these opportunities for personal, professional growth, not only did teachers grow opportunities for their students but a number of homegrown administrators have developed from within the faculty as well, thanks to RSU 18's financial support of masters-level programs.

By encouraging teachers to exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school, Messalonskee High School students receive greater support, and become more engaged in their learning.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 5 Indicator 11

Conclusions

The school board, superintendent, and principal of Messalonskee High School are consistently collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st-century learning expectations.

Building administrators hold weekly meetings to discuss goals for MHS with special attention given to aligning school goals with district goals. District administrators meet annually during a summer retreat to design district goals. In all goal-setting, school and district administrators strive to establish learning expectations across the district. All district leaders participate actively in the various professional organizations appropriate to their roles as they relate to Messalonskee High School.

According to survey results, 69.2 percent of faculty agree that the school board, superintendent, and principal collaborate in supporting the achievement of the 21st-century learning expectations. However, many staff members showed an inconsistent understanding of the relationship between the school's 21st-century learning expectations and Maine's Guiding Principles, although the school constructed its Guiding Principles – MHS's 21st-century learning expectations – to align with Maine's Guiding Principles. Consequently, the MHS administration has plans to delineate and define more clearly the school's Guiding Principles and to establish procedures to achieve them.

The administrative team meets on a weekly basis to discuss and align building goals with district goals, hoping initiatives implemented will benefit the facility and members of the school community. The school board meets twice a month and most administrators attend those meetings in order to maintain a clear understanding of district goals and how they align with MHS goals. The administration collaborates on a number of initiatives for the building and district, hoping to establish a clear direction to guide the principles and functions of MHS. MHS identified such examples as a Comprehensive Needs Assessment, work to update the district technology plan, policy reviews, curriculum work, and close collaboration with the Career and Technical Education resources of the Maine Department of Education, Mid-Maine Technical Center, and local higher-level institutions offering dual enrollment opportunities.

Since the Mid-Maine Technical Center delivers part of the education of many MHS students, the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and school board representatives serve on the MMTC Governance Board. This collaboration serves to align MHS with decision-making around curricular goals and teaching methodologies at the technical center. Also, the principal and guidance department serve on the MMTC steering committee, enhancing communication around the goals and principles of both schools. All of these groups participated in the planning and decision-making for the new athletic complex. Thus, all constituencies have representation in defining and supporting the achievement of the 21st-century learning expectations set for MHS students.

Because the school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st-century learning expectations, the entire school community is equipped to take a unified approach to support student success.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- teachers
- Endicott survey

Standard 5 Indicator 12

Conclusions

The principal of Messalonskee High School has sufficient authority, in the vast majority of situations, to make the decisions necessary to lead the school.

This authority has been shown through the process of curriculum revisions, setting school-wide goals, a recent increase of autonomy over the operating budget for the school, continuing to direct the leadership team, approving new courses that staff bring to the table, and overseeing the teacher evaluation system. The principal has the authority to lead her building through curriculum reviews, alignment with Mid-Maine Technical Center curriculum, and the creation and growth of the end-of-year Year End Studies (YES) program, revision of the school schedule, and supervision and evaluation of the professional and support staff. According to survey results, 71.2 percent of the faculty and 61.4 percent of parents agree that the school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school.

Since the principal of MHS has sufficient authority in the vast majority of situations to make decisions necessary to lead the school, she can more readily provide effective leadership of the school community, staff, and students.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- school board
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Endicott survey

Standard 5 Commendations

Commendation

The devotion of the Messalonskee High School community to creating a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive climate for all students and staff

Commendation

The strong sense of shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all Messalonskee High School community members

Commendation

The emphasis on choice in defining each student's program of study

Commendation

The substantial variety of club and activity selections in a variety of settings

Commendation

The innovative activities like the Year End Studies (YES) program and the 30-Second Challenge

Commendation

The collaboration of teachers to create and implement professional development suited to their departments

Commendation

The involvement of students on the leadership team

Commendation

The implementation of the senior mentor program to promote a sense of belonging among Freshman students

Commendation

The strong administrative support for teachers as they develop courses to meet student interests and needs

Commendation

The administration's strong sense of purpose in decision-making and leadership

Standard 5 Recommendations

Recommendation

Ensure that all students understand and practice safety protocols for all areas of the facility, especially during lockdowns

Recommendation

Implement clear, complete assessment of the 21st century learning expectations

Recommendation

Review and adjust advisory scheduling and practices to support each student's achievement of the 21st century learning expectations, regardless of the program of study selected

Recommendation

Evaluate the effectiveness of the 5x5 schedule to ensure effective delivery of the curriculum to support student learning

Standard 6 Indicator 1

Conclusions

Messalonskee High School (MHS) 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.

MHS provides a substantial number of formal and informal interventions for its students. These support services include both on-site and remote alternative educational programming, learning center, staffing meetings, guided support and tagging, credit recovery during the Year End Studies (YES) program, regional summer school, teacher office hours before and/or after school, as well as the advisory program.

MHS uses timely interventions in the form of staffing meetings as well as teacher and guidance support meetings. MHS holds staffing meetings on an as-needed basis when teachers, counselors, parents, or other members of the MHS community identify students as struggling in multiple courses or with attendance. MHS staff also conducts a program called Grades-Attendance-Behavior (GAB) to explore student performance, with advisory teachers performing checks on all students in the three categories named in the program title. Messalonskee High School's self-study identified a need to institute a Response to Intervention (RTI) program within the school to enhance the school's ability to make timely interventions. Although MHS currently has no formal RTI program, the staff informally identifies and applies many improvement strategies through the interventions named above.

MHS also has coordinated intervention strategies that interconnect many departments within the school. Administration, guidance, teaching staff, including education technologists and alternative education instructors, play a part in these interventions. MHS's "tagging" program, incorporated four years ago as a way to provide every student the daily opportunity to complete or revise unfinished work, get added instruction, convey information, or contact instructors or assistance, allows both teachers and students to identify students in need of support. Guidance staff and administration meet weekly to coordinate intervention strategies for at-risk students. This may include a referral to one of the alternative education placements or the learning center as a Guided Study environment.

MHS institutes directive interventions when all entities involved determine that such interventions offer the best course of action for the student. MHS has an Alternative Education program, The Year End Studies program, and the Regional Summer School program. The YES program has run for two years prior to this year and provides students the opportunity to complete credit they may not yet have earned through Credit Recovery. The regional summer school program provides students an additional opportunity to regain credits in courses in which they received a 50 or higher. Students who need instruction outside the normal curriculum have an opportunity in the Alternative Education program at MHS. All teachers offer flexible office hours, sometimes before school and sometimes after, to support students in need of added instruction or other academic support.

Messalonskee High 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.

Sources of Evidence

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

- parents

Standard 6 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Messalonskee High School provides information to families, especially but not only to those most in need, about available student support services, as well as general information about the school to the general school population and surrounding communities.

MHS systematically provides timely information to families and the student body. With regards to those in most need, the school provides phone numbers listed for Crisis and Counseling Centers and LifeLine. Families also receive links to information about substance use, a clothes pantry and Northern Area Mental Health Initiative (NAMHI). Students may be referred for special programmings, such as an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) or a plan under Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), through administration, a school counselor, classroom teacher or medical professional. MHS then contacts the parent or guardian to schedule meetings designed to determine the initial or continued eligibility of the student to receive services. MHS also provides information regarding the nutritional and social support programs that students may have accessed in elementary and middle school to ensure that they have the same supports available, as appropriate, at MHS.

MHS also distributes regular, daily information in many forms including an all-call program, newsletters, social media, The Messenger, the principal's blog and notices sent home. Providing regular information to parents, staff and the community clearly appears as a strong and welcoming benefit. Parents and students all expressed comfort with the level of information that the school shares with them.

Pertinent support services that MHS offers to families consists of a school food pantry, real time access to grades and standards through PowerSchool, medical offerings such as flu shots, financial aid information nights, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion, and parent-teacher conferences, a digital Course of Studies, curriculum nights, Community Concept Services, and Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Messalonskee High School provides timely, regular and pertinent information to families, especially but not limited to those most in need, about support services and general information concerning school activities and culture, thus supporting students in achieving the school's 21st-century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents

Standard 6 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Messalonskee High School's support services staff use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student.

All support services staff have access to a school laptop, PowerSchool, and the school portal. This allows them to gather notes, to work online, and to collaborate with teachers and students to support student learning. The educational technicians also have access to grades, attendance and medical information for their students. PowerSchool shows support staff as case managers which allows them opportunities to monitor grades, the achievement of standards, and work progress. According to survey responses of educational technicians, 81.8 percent of support staff said they have access to technology in order to help students. However, only 54 percent said they have access to the necessary software to provide adequate services.

Support staff at MHS use available technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- school support staff

Standard 6 Indicator 4

Conclusions

School counseling services at Messalonskee High School have a substantially adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who deliver a written but somewhat dated, developmental program; meet periodically with students to provide personal, academic, career and college counseling; engage in individual sessions but limited services in group settings; deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers; collect some ongoing, relevant assessment data, but insufficient feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st-century learning expectations.

Messalonskee High School employs a school counseling staff consisting of three full-time school counselors, one educational technician III for academic support, one administrative assistant, and one registrar. The school counseling staff have a written curriculum; however, they need to bring it up to date. Counselors deliver a limited portion of this curriculum in a group setting. Other group counseling would enhance the delivery of services such as for students with shared problems or interests.

School counselors do their best to meet regularly with individual students, although students express a need for more regular meetings. Each counselor serves approximately 250 students with whom they meet in order to discuss personal, academic, career and college counseling needs. According to survey data, 20.1 percent of students state that they meet with their school counselor regularly, while 60.6 percent disagree and 19.3 percent remain undecided; however, 62 percent feel comfortable going to their school counselor while 18.1 percent disagree and 19.9 percent express no opinion.

A licensed school social worker provides services to students identified as needing special education services two days each week. The school now has an outside licensed counselor twice a week and a full-time substance use counselor through Day One, an outside agency that addresses substance use and mental health concerns. The school connects with other outside agencies in order to provide clinical counseling to MHS students if needed. Because of connections with numerous local and state agencies and organizations, MHS school counseling services deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers as needed.

The counseling staff regularly meet with the administration to identify at-risk students and to identify support systems that may be available to assist them in meeting student needs. Teachers and advisors collect information about students' academic, attendance, and behavioral performances, from classroom observations and the Grades-Attendance-Behavior (GAB) meetings, and pass this information to appropriate school personnel in order to identify unserved student needs. The school refers to data from the College Board, Maine Educational Loan Marketing Corporation (MELMAC), and National Student Clearinghouse for various purposes in serving student needs. While this awareness of data from outside Regional School Unit 18 (RSU 18) may prove informative, MHS collects limited local data, such as consistent feedback from the school community and alumni, for comparison to the national material.

Since the Messalonskee High School counseling services have an adequate number of qualified professionals who deliver a written but somewhat dated developmental program; do their best to meet periodically with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling; engage in individual sessions; deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers; and use some ongoing, relevant assessment data to improve services, when counselors increase the regularity of individual meetings with students, establish consistent, appropriate use of group sessions, and strengthen data collection from the school community and alumni to promote greater growth of counseling services, MHS will better support each student's achievement of the school's 21st-century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- Endicott survey

Standard 6 Indicator 5

Conclusions

Messalonskee High 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 some ongoing, relevant assessment data, although no formal process exists to solicit or receive feedback from the school community to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st-century learning expectations.

MHS has one registered nurse, as well as a licensed athletic trainer. A local doctor visits the school weekly to assess and prescribe treatment of athletes. Also, MHS receives some added health services by hosting students studying physical therapy, occupational therapy, and athletic training at local colleges and universities. The school nurse sees students during her regular hours from 8:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., when she manages student medications, follows treatment plans per medical documentation, as well as routinely monitoring students with chronic conditions. Consistently available in case of medical emergencies, the nurse often attends meetings concerning Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) as well. The school nurse trains staff members who may have to provide care in personal health emergencies such as allergic reactions, accidents, or acute health problems. The school nurse communicates with local hospitals and doctors' offices, as well as with parents in order to address the needs of all students. The school nurse keeps detailed and organized records of all students receiving medical assistance. Preventative care includes dental clinics, flu-shot clinics, vision screenings and other medical assessments conducted on an as-needed basis.

Survey data shows that 62.4 percent of students feel comfortable going to the nurse, while 15.1 percent disagree with that statement, and 22.5 percent of students remain undecided. Staff (78.8 percent) believe that MHS has sufficient certified/licensed health services personnel, while 5.8 percent disagree, and 15.4 percent express a neutral stance.

Because 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; and use some ongoing, relevant assessment data; Messalonskee High School meets the great majority of students' health needs, and will serve student needs more fully when MHS implements a formal process to receive feedback from the school community to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st-century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 6 Indicator 6

Conclusions

Library/media services at Messalonskee High School (MHS) have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who actively engage 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 and during school, but not consistently after school; are responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning; provides key resources to improve student learning and well-being, and are sometimes integrated into curriculum and instructional practices, but has yet to conduct ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services, so does not consistently ensure each student achieves the school's 21st-century learning expectations.

The library webpage ensures that students have 24-hour access to resources for school assignments and recreational interests, as well as links to digital resources and e-books. The library opens at 7:30 a.m. each morning and operates until 3:45 p.m., except on Fridays when it closes at 3:00 p.m. It remains open during lunches but after-school hours have not always been consistent. According to the survey, 85.1 percent of students say they can access the school library before, during, and after school hours, 4.4 percent disagree and 10.5 percent expressed no opinion. Library staff meets regularly with teachers to collaborate on lesson plans. The library purchases the materials that teachers request and provides suggestions to support curricular and recreational learning needs. The library has print, non-print, and audio-visual materials available. Subscription databases pertain to specific subjects and students have access to a multitude of e-books that multiple users can access simultaneously.

The library can hold 85 people and students can work on jigsaw puzzles, play chess, or attend club meetings among other co-curricular activities. The library staff serves as advisors for the Book Club, Photography Club, and the Dungeons and Dragons Club. A survey sent to students in the spring of 2018 found that 78 percent of students use the library to study. Students use the library office and workroom for recordings, club meetings, and tutoring. All freshmen receive a library orientation at the beginning of the school year to show them the resources available in the library. Staff use interlibrary-loan services extensively and will borrow books from anywhere in the country, as well as through frequent visits to local libraries. The librarian provides research assistance to students enrolled in independent studies, and the library's collection has a selection of books for students not reading at grade level. Due to students advocating for their varied needs, changes in recent years include acquiring comfortable seating, creating reading/study nooks, and removing the photocopier/printer from the small conference room to create a space for tutoring, quiet study, or group work.

According to survey results, 92.3 percent of staff agree that the library information services provide a wide range of print and non-print materials, including technologies and other information services, that fully support the curriculum, while 1.9 percent disagree and 5.8 percent have no opinion. Usage statistics also show that class visits to the library have decreased, however. Survey data indicates that the majority of students and staff believe the library has the resources they need, but only 21 percent of the students and 53 percent of staff state that students use the library regularly for classes. When queried about this, many teachers stated that they use the library less for research since the implementation of the shortened class periods in the 5x5 schedule, with five periods a day for 60-minute periods. The prior schedule had four 72-minute periods.

Because library/media services at Messalonskee High School have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who actively engage 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 and during school; are responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning; provide key resources to improve student learning and well-being; when MHS library/media services become fully integrated into curricular and instructional practices; consistently staffs the facility during after-school hours; and conducts ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services, MHS will more

consistently ensure each student achieves the school's 21st-century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 6 Indicator 7

Conclusions

Messalonskee High School support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and English language learners (ELL), have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who regularly and by design collaborate with teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to support student achievement of the school's 21st-century learning expectations and to maximize inclusive learning opportunities for most students. However, MHS has achieved minimal, 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.

Messalonskee High School's support staff includes five special education teachers/case managers and eleven special educational technicians (although this number varies from year to year with the population and student needs) who serve approximately 110 students with an IEP. Additionally, MHS employs a part-time social worker for special education students, district ELL specialist and therapists providing speech, occupational therapy, and physical therapy services. The school adheres to all federal and state laws regarding the identification, monitoring, and referral of students for special education services. The three school counselors manage approximately 69 students who receive services through 504 Plans.

Case managers regularly communicate with parents, classroom teachers, administrators, and other team members in order to ensure that students have access to the least restrictive environment. A number of departments offer resource-level classes, including support in English language arts (ELA), mathematics and life skills, and occasional fine arts and humanities courses. Meanwhile, special needs students in all other content areas receive services in mainstream classrooms. Identified students in these classes have their needs met via IEP and 504 accommodations.

According to survey results, 75 percent of staff feel that support services personnel collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff to support students' achievement of the school's 21st-century learning expectations, while 9.6 percent disagree and 15.4 percent remain undecided. Collaboration occurs in a variety of ways. Formal collaboration occurs at, and prior to, 504 and IEP meetings. All staff members who work with identified students have access to their individual plans, either in paper or electronic form. Therefore, teachers can always review and assess the accommodations necessary for a given student, facilitating accommodations in mainstream classrooms. PowerSchool, the school's system for documenting student achievement and recording grades, also lists accommodations for individuals with 504 Plans. However, survey results show that only 40.4 percent of staff agree that support services personnel use assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and to achieve the school's learning expectations, while 15.4 percent are in disagreement and 44.2 percent are undecided.

Since Messalonskee High School support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and English language learners (ELL), have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who regularly and by design collaborate with teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to support student achieve the school's 21st-century learning expectations and maximize inclusive learning opportunities for most students, when MHS achieves appropriate, ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community to improve services, the school will better ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st-century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview

- Endicott survey

Standard 6 Commendations

Commendation

The timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies that meet student needs

Commendation

The tagging program that allows teachers to provide additional support, time, and learning opportunities for struggling learners

Commendation

The school's use of a wide variety of methods to deliver information

Commendation

The addition of a full-time substance use counselor

Commendation

The health office's ongoing care programs that include health care planning, and assessment of and staff education about student medical needs

Commendation

The provision of opportunities for on-site health care with licensed, medical providers

Commendation

The library's coordination and support of school-wide technology use and digital citizenship programs

Standard 6 Recommendations

Recommendation

Provide regular professional development and training to support the support services staff's use of technology

Recommendation

Enhance direct school counseling services through regular, timely meetings with students

Recommendation

Review and adjust, as needed, group sessions provided through school counseling

Recommendation

Develop and implement a formal process to receive feedback from the school community in an effort to improve student health services

Standard 7 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The community and the district's governing body provide dependable funding for a wide range of school programs and services at Messalonskee High School (MHS).

Several facts lend credence to this conclusion: per pupil expenditures near the state average, reasonable student-to-staff ratios, adequate student support services including three guidance counselors, a student support counselor, a licensed clinical social worker who works part-time at MHS to serve special education students as well as at schools throughout Regional School Unit 18 (RSU 18), and an outside support clinician. Recently, MHS added a substance use/mental health counselor in collaboration with Day One. Additionally, MHS offers a wide variety of student course offerings as well as a healthy number of co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities for students. Students (68.8 percent) report, "My school has a wide range of programs and services." Fifty-two percent of staff members report the same.

Fifty-two percent of staff report support for professional staff development through reimbursement of the costs for coursework, often used for recertification or the attainment of an advanced degree, as required of professional staff within ten years of initial hire. Conversely, staff report that often, in-district professional development opportunities have offered little relevance for high school staff, an issue that has been addressed recently by providing greater latitude for departments to develop content-specific professional development activities. Staff and school leadership report using federal funds for improved teacher qualifications and grant funds to support professional development; however, the general fund budget offers limited support dedicated to this purpose.

Messalonskee High School enjoys one-to-one student technology through the Maine Learning Technology Initiative (MLTI) program and provides technical support with a robust district information technology (IT) department, including 1.5 FTE staff dedicated to MHS. Staff (80.8 percent) report, "The community and the district's governing body provide adequate funding for a wide range of technology support."

Although it is difficult to identify specific unmet needs, the school reports historic practices limiting spending to 70 percent of budgeted amounts, as well as "budget freeze" practices early in the school year, resulting in a lack of sufficient equipment, materials, and supplies. Recent changes in district budgeting practices have given greater autonomy to building and program administrators, allowing them to relieve some of these issues.

Messalonskee High School enjoys dependable funding for a wide range of school programs and services as provided by the community and district's governing body, but lacks sufficient local, general fund budget support of non-tuition professional development opportunities.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- school board
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Messalonskee High School (MHS) develops, plans and funds programs to ensure the daily maintenance and repair of the building and school plant, as well as to keep the school clean on a daily basis, although staff members have raised issues concerning the speed with which some maintenance requests have been addressed.

The custodial/maintenance staff, comprised of 5.75 full-time equivalent employees, clean and maintain the building following a daily custodial responsibilities checklist. Sixty percent of students and 55.8 percent of staff believe the building is clean and well maintained. The self-study does identify a need for improved oversight of daily building custodial duties to ensure the cleanliness of facilities and restocking of supplies such as paper towels and soap.

The self-study identifies improved clarification/communication of the reporting protocol for teachers to bring attention to the maintenance needs of the school. Survey results support this position with only 28.9 percent of staff agreeing that maintenance staff complete needed repairs in a timely manner. Currently, staff report maintenance issues/needs to the day custodian who assesses if the custodial staff can complete the repair. If the custodial staff can complete the repair, it is done in a timely manner. If the custodial staff cannot complete the repair, the day custodian makes a request to the maintenance department using the School Dude software. The director of maintenance triages the requests and assigns maintenance staff to make the repair. The time required to complete this process can result in slow completion of repairs.

When Messalonskee High School develops, plans and funds programs to ensure the timely maintenance and repair of the building and school plant, the cleaning of the school on a daily basis, the oversight of daily building custodial duties, and the time-efficient reporting protocol to identify cleaning and maintenance needs, MHS will enjoy timely cleaning of a well-maintained facility that supports student learning.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- teachers
- school support staff
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 3

Conclusions

The community funds and the school implements an informal long-range plan that addresses programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements.

In 2017, the communities of Regional School Unit 18 (RSU 18) supported a borrowing package totaling \$13.9 million. A committee composed of community members, as well as RSU 18 staff, met and prioritized facilities needs. At Messalonskee High School, this funding resulted in \$897,504 for continued infrastructure (i.e., roofs, lighting) upgrades, as well as upgrades to the science laboratories, primarily repiping propane lines. MHS dedicated \$3.9 million of the \$13.9 million bond to a significant upgrade of the school's athletics complex, including a synthetic eight-lane track, an artificial turf playing field, LED lighting, additional storage, and new stadium seating.

Enrollment changes drive staffing levels at MHS and the building principal leads a committee in a review of staffing needs each spring. Additionally, the special education director reviews special education staffing needs in concert with the middle school and high school special education faculty. Historically, increased enrollments have not always resulted in increased staffing. Prior to the 2018-2019 school year, MHS experienced a reduction in staff as a result of a decrease in enrollment.

Eighty-nine percent of students agree that "The school has a sufficient number of computers for student use" and 91.6 percent of students report that "Computers are available to me before, during, and after school hours." Students report technology adequate to support their learning.

The visiting team could not discern if a written maintenance and capital improvement program or a ten-year capital improvement plan exists, as required by 20-A MRS 4001. Because the application for Revolving Renovation funding requires the inclusion of these programs/plans, and the superintendent shared some success with accessing this funding stream, it appears reasonable to assume that some form of program/plan does exist. Additionally, the school continues to work from its current capital improvement plan. In 2015, a facilities committee worked to identify needed building-level improvements. The committee's recommendations yielded the \$13.9 million bond issue that passed by a substantial margin.

The community attempts to fund and the school seeks to implement an informal long-range plan that addresses programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 4

Conclusions

Faculty and building administrators at Messalonskee High School are becoming actively involved in the development of the budget.

School administration solicits requests for equipment and supply needs from MHS teachers. Departments at Messalonskee High School meet to prioritize needs and to share those needs with the principal. The principal works with the central office to develop a budget that provides adequate support for student learning and staff needs.

Despite the historic budget "freezes" and spending limits at 70 percent of approved budgets, teachers report that the collaborative nature of the budget process results in meeting the essential needs of students. Central office staff report that, while those limitation issues have historically been the case, recent changes result in the building principal having greater autonomy in the deployment of the school budget.

When faculty and building principal involvement in development and implementation of the budget becomes the norm at Messalonskee High School, all parties will feel a greater sense of staff satisfaction that resource allocations are equitable and supportive of student learning.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 5

Conclusions

The Messalonskee High School site and plant support the delivery of high-quality programs and services.

Recent infrastructure upgrades to Messalonskee High School, include improved lighting, ventilation, and energy conservation improvements, continued attention to roof renewal, and science lab updates, offer evidence of the school's recognition that the school site and plant impact the delivery of high-quality school programs and services. The school has suitable spaces available to house a wide variety of educational and enrichment programs. An 826 seat performing arts center serves both school and community needs. The school cafeteria and gymnasium, as well as other learning spaces, are available to the community, who use these facilities regularly for adult education programs, recreational activities, craft fairs, and fundraising events, as well as music and sports camps.

In 2019, MHS invested \$3.9 million to enhance the athletics complex to include a synthetic, eight-lane track, artificial turf playing field, LED lighting, additional storage, and new stadium seating, and allows community use of the facilities during non-school hours. An outdoor learning area and trail system adjacent to the athletics complex support quality school programs and serves community programs as well.

A biomass ("bull chip") boiler supplies heat for Messalonskee High School during the majority of the heating season. Hot water circulates underground from the boiler to MHS, as well as to two other school district facilities. This system provides adequate heat for all learning spaces and has resulted in savings of heating costs for the school.

The Messalonskee High School site and plant support the delivery of high-quality programs and services.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- central office personnel
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 6

Conclusions

Messalonskee High School maintains documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws, and are in compliance with local fire, health and safety regulations.

The Regional School Unit 18 (RSU 18) Central Office maintains records reflecting compliance with laws and regulations, primarily under the supervision of the director of maintenance. The central office maintains the primary set of Material Data Sheets, with copies filed at MHS. The science department reviews and updates its catalog of chemicals on an annual basis and contracts for the disposal of unused, outdated or unsafe materials.

MHS presented documentation for required testing of sprinkler systems and fire alarms. The school also maintains asbestos and integrated pest management records and posts proper notices. MHS conducts lead and copper testing on water, even though the school's water supply comes from a municipal water source.

MHS, as a part of the self-study report, shared a 2015 inspection report completed by the State Fire Marshall's office. It listed 15 items requiring correction. The school reports that all issues have been addressed.

Regional School Unit 18 and Messalonskee High 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 resulting in a healthy and safe learning environment.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 7

Conclusions

Professional staff at Messalonskee High School 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.

Regional School Unit 18 (RSU 18) has set district-level goals to engage more fully parents and families as partners in each student's education, and administrators and teachers have adopted that goal as a priority at Messalonskee High School. Opportunities to engage parents and families include a barbecue for incoming freshmen, two parent-teacher conference and curriculum nights, and a wide variety of after-school activities such as athletics, concerts and drama productions which encourage family involvement in the lives of MHS students.

The administration encourages parental contact and considers updates on student progress as crucial to student success. MHS uses PowerSchool to communicate student achievement, as well as the MHS website, the Principal's Pen Newsletter, Google Classroom, robocalls, and applications such as Edmodo and Remind to distribute information. Faculty and staff also use of social media such as Twitter and FaceBook. RSU 18 employs a 0.5 FTE staff member to manage school websites and social media. The district performs regular analysis of end-users to ensure that information reaches all demographic groups. The administration communicates directly with parents regarding attendance and summer school opportunities. The guidance department releases a quarterly newsletter as well. Staff report that the administration and the social worker make home visits if other means of communication fail. Sixty-seven percent of staff agree with the statement, "The professional staff actively engages parents and families as partners in each student's education," while 42.1 percent of parents agree with the same statement.

Continued efforts of Messalonskee High School's professional staff to engage actively with parents and families as partners in each student's education, and to reach out specifically to families who have been less connected with the school, will result in greater overall student success.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- teachers
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- school website

Standard 7 Indicator 8

Conclusions

Messalonskee High School (MHS) develops productive parent, community, business and higher education partnerships that support student learning.

While 83.5 percent of students agree with the statement, "My parents have the opportunity to meet teachers, building administrators, and school counselors," only 34 percent of students agree with the statement, "My parents participate in school programs." This would indicate that, while plenty of opportunities exist for productive parent partnerships with the school, participation in those opportunities appears limited. MHS invites parents to attend Student of the Month assemblies at which the school recognizes both students and staff for accomplishments, as well as providing parent academic opportunities such as STEM Nights, Math Mornings, Poetry events and other topic-specific parent opportunities.

Fifty-nine percent of staff agree with the statement, "The school has effective partnerships with parents, community organizations, businesses, and higher education to support student learning," while 43 percent of parents agree with the same statement. Examples of opportunities for students to access learning beyond the standard offerings at MHS, yet offered within the school facility, include AP4All, Maine Virtual High School, Jobs for Maine Graduates and Advanced Placement classes. Attendance at Mid-Maine Technical Center (MMTC) provides an opportunity for career and technical education offerings. Annually, over 100 students attend MMTC. A Maine Educational Loan Marketing Corporation (MELMAC) grant provides students with opportunities for career exploration and college tours. The school's proximity to Kennebec Valley Community College, Thomas College, and Colby College provides additional pathways to accelerated educational opportunities prior to high school graduation.

Relationships with local businesses are reflected in monetary and other support. Examples include Wrabacon's support for the robotics team and Camden National Bank offering funds to support staff and student experiences. Local and state police agencies have visited the Forensic Science class, Trout Unlimited has visited the Environmental Science classes, and the National Guard and Sportsman's Alliance of Maine have made presentations to support and expand student learning at MHS. The school, in turn, participates in local fundraising events to benefit such organizations as the Humane Society, Travis Mills Foundation, and Parker's Art Cart. Messalonskee High School requires each student to complete 40 hours of community service in order to graduate.

Because Messalonskee High School develops productive parent, community, business and higher education partnerships that support student learning, MHS students enjoy enhanced learning experiences.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teachers
- students
- department leaders
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Commendations

Commendation

The wide variety of course offerings, as well as a healthy number of co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities

Commendation

The availability of 1:1 technology that supports teaching and learning

Commendation

The community support for a \$13.9 million bond to address infrastructure renewal and facility upgrades

Commendation

The plans to provide building administration with increased autonomy in deploying approved general fund expenditures

Commendation

The dedicated staff time to manage school websites and social media platforms, with analysis of end users to ensure communication with all demographic groups

Commendation

The opportunities for and efforts to develop productive parent partnerships

Commendation

The development of additional pathways to graduation through partnerships with area higher education institutions

Commendation

The development of relationships with business and non-profit organizations, resulting in enhanced opportunities for student learning

Commendation

The availability to and the community's regular use of school core facilities and other learning spaces for adult education programs, recreational activities, craft fairs, and fund-raising events, as well as music and sports camps

Standard 7 Recommendations

Recommendation

Improve oversight of daily building custodial duties to ensure the cleanliness of facilities and restocking of supplies

Recommendation

Review, clarify and clearly communicate the reporting protocol for teachers to bring attention to the maintenance needs of the school

Recommendation

Ensure a timely response to maintenance requests that require the attention of the maintenance department

Recommendation

Formalize the process of developing long-range plans that address programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology and capital improvements

Recommendation

Continue enhanced building and program administrator autonomy in budget management

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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

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

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

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

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

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

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

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

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

Roster of Team Members

Chair(s)

Chair: Edward Wilkins - New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.

Assistant Chair: David Walker - Regional School Unit #34

Team Members

Kathleen Brush - Spruce Mountain High School

Valerie Densmore - Mount Ararat High School

William Glennon - Lake Region High School

Mark Kenney - Telstar Regional High School

Sophia Lataille - Kennebunk High School

Robert Moholland - Calais Middle/High School

Colleen Mulligan - Winnisquam Regional High School

Carl Robbins - Bangor High School

Alyson Saunders - Dexter Regional High School