

## Background: NEASC report of 1999

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges includes the Commission on Public Secondary Schools. Accreditation by NEASC is an independent verification that the school has attained an established level of quality that is nationally recognized. This Commission works with member schools to ensure, through this ongoing accreditation process, that all students experience an equitable, quality education vital to the success of a democratic society. The accreditation process addresses these areas: Core values, Beliefs and Learning Expectations; Curriculum; Instruction; Assessment of and for Student Learning; School Culture and Leadership; School Resources for Learning; and Community Resources for Learning.

In the report of the visiting committee to Fairfield High School in 1999, several areas indicated a need for increased curriculum coordination across all teachers, leadership in developing assessment and improving the ineffectiveness of the system in place at that time. The following are excerpts from the NEASC Commission on Public Secondary Schools Report of the Visiting Committee at Fairfield High School, September 26-29, 1999:

*The need for more systematic and ongoing curriculum coordination on a school-wide basis within and among the various teaching and learning areas is imperative. Across the three houses curricular inconsistency is fairly widespread, and the need for formal leadership positions in each learning area has become critical to the improvement of teaching and learning at Fairfield High School. (page 6, paragraph 4)*

*...the school must move forward in developing criteria and benchmarks by which to measure student performance in response to the school's statement of purpose. These issues of assessment also point up the crucial importance of learning area leadership positions in such a large and comprehensive high school. With more meaningful learning area leadership, the school can create a more coherent program of student assessment on a school-wide basis and, thus, permit assessment practices to better inform instructional practices within the framework of the school's statement of purpose. (page 6/7, paragraph 5)*

*Provide leadership positions in each subject area at the high school to fully implement the statement of purpose in the areas of curriculum and assessment. (page 17, paragraph 2)*

*Data collected from staff members of all departments indicate that a major concern is the lack of staff devoted to department/curriculum leadership, both at the high school and system-wide. While all departments have liaisons, their responsibilities, for the most part, are limited to communicating information to colleagues and facilitating the budget process. Of the fifteen areas, only four have leadership whose responsibility is to assist in the development and improvement of instruction. This lack of curriculum leadership at the high school causes inconsistencies in articulation between the middle schools and the high school as well as inconsistencies within the department itself and is not viewed as reflective of the Board of Education's commitment to developing and implementing an effective K-12 curriculum design. (page 20, paragraph 6)*

*One of the greatest challenges to FHS is following the district curriculum implementation schedule without the assistance of on-site curriculum leadership. The need for high school based curriculum leaders is universally recognized by staff and administrators in the self-study and during the team visit. The absence of curriculum leaders who could assist in linking curriculum to staff development has resulted in a program of in-service experiences that are related more to the needs of individual teachers than to overall program needs. The revision and development of new curricula necessitates a systematic program of professional development. Horizontal and vertical articulation appears to be in need of attention. (page 23, paragraph 2,3,4)*

*Without an individual who is responsible to analyze test data, the approach to utilizing test scores to guide curriculum and instructional modifications has been fragmented and erratic. (page 24, paragraph 4)*

Employ curriculum leaders based at the high school in order to ensure appropriate and effective curriculum development. (page 25)

A major weakness in the faculty evaluation system is the lack of curriculum accountability within disciplines. Without effective content area leadership, the housemaster is the only person evaluating the teacher, and cannot assess accuracy for specific content areas. (page 46, paragraph 3)

### NEASC Reports of 2008 and 2009

The following visits by NEASC in 2008 for Fairfield Ludlowe High School and in 2009 for Fairfield Warde High School resulted in a list of recommendations that the schools were expected to address and report progress on in the five year follow-up reports. In addition, when the visiting committees return in 2018 and 2019 respectively, these specific recommendations for improvement will be reviewed. The recommendations listed below are either primary or secondary responsibilities of the curriculum leaders.

One note: These visits were completed in 2008 and 2009, prior to the adoption of the Common Core Standards in Connecticut, requiring a re-alignment of the curriculum and preparation for new SBAC assessments, and prior to the adoption of a state required teacher/administrator evaluation system. Those three initiatives – Common Core, SBAC Assessments and Teacher Evaluation – also require extensive time from the curriculum leaders.

#### Curriculum

- Complete all curriculum documents as soon as possible.
- Provide training and support to assist teachers in how to write, implement, review, and revise curriculum, and in the use of student assessment data to inform.
- Design and implement a regular forum to allow faculty member not have professional conversation about curriculum integration, instructional strategies, and interdisciplinary connections.
- Develop and implement a formal process to articulate and coordinate curricula K- 12.
- Institute a review process that includes the gathering of longitudinal data to ensure effective curriculum revision and designate time for the faculty members to review and revise curriculum.
- Ensure that academic expectations are included in the curriculum and that all students have the opportunity to practice and achieve those expectations.
- Modify the format of curriculum guides to ensure that they provide assessment techniques including the use of school-wide rubrics to evaluate student success in achieving the relevant expectations.
- Provide professional development sessions in all subject areas that focus on alignment of the curriculum with the academic expectations, curriculum review and revision based on student performance data from common assessments in addition to standardized tests and the use of school-wide rubrics.

#### Instruction

- Implement a variety of strategies to engage students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking in all classrooms.
- Provide structured time and direction for collaboration among and between colleagues.
- Continue efforts to maintain the rigor in all classes, especially the new classes created by the merging of level 3 and level 2 classes through professional development offerings and instructional leadership.
- Ensure that adequate professional development is provided to support new initiatives or practices.

### *Assessment of and for Student Learning*

- *Develop and implement strategies to fully implement the school-wide rubrics.*
- *Design and implement a plan to help faculty members collect and analyze data from assessment using the school-wide and course-specific rubrics.*
- *Design and implement common formative and summative assessments in every department in all departments based on and measured by school-wide rubrics.*
- *Design a formal school-wide professional development program that provides opportunities for teachers to develop a broader understanding of the types and purposes of assessment.*

### *Leadership*

- *Increase opportunities for collaboration among administrators, curriculum leaders, teachers and support staff within and across department in support of student learning.*
- *Gather and examine student performance data for classes that have been compacted to determine the success of the new grouping pattern and the needs of teachers and students in these classes.*

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