

# New England Association of Schools and Colleges



Commission on Public Secondary Schools

## **Report of the Visiting Committee for South Kingstown High School**

**Wakefield, Rhode Island**

September 25 – 28, 2011

Joseph Damplo, CHAIR

Lisa Pasonelli, ASSISTANT CHAIR

Robert McCarthy, PRINCIPAL

**STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS**  
**THE DISTRIBUTION, USE, AND SCOPE OF THE**  
**VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**

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

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

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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

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

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

### **Teaching and Learning Standards**

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 Commission's visiting committee, and the follow-up program carried out by the school to implement the findings of its own self-study and the valid recommendations of the visiting committee and those identified by the Commission in the Follow-Up process. Continued accreditation requires that the school be reevaluated at least once every ten years and that it show continued progress addressing identified needs.

### **Preparation for the Evaluation Visit - The School Self-Study**

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

The self-study of South Kingstown High School extended over a period of thirteen (13) school months from April 2010 to June 2011. The visiting committee was pleased to note that students, parents, and community members joined the professional staff in the self-study deliberations.

Public schools evaluated by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools must complete appropriate materials to assess their adherence to the Standards for Accreditation and the quality of their educational offerings in light of the school's mission, learning expectations, and unique student population. In addition to using the Self-Study Guides developed by a representative group of New England educators and approved by the Commission, South Kingstown High School also used questionnaires developed by The Research Center at Endicott College to reflect

the concepts contained in the Standards for Accreditation. These materials provided discussion items for a comprehensive assessment of the school by the professional staff during the self-study.

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

### **The Process Used by the Visiting Committee**

A visiting committee of sixteen (16) evaluators was assigned by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate South Kingstown High School. The Committee members spent four days in Wakefield, Rhode Island, reviewed the self-study documents which had been prepared for their examination, met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students, and parents, shadowed students, visited classes, and interviewed teachers to determine the degree to which the school meets the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. Since the evaluators represented public schools and central office administrators, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of South Kingstown High School.

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 32 hours shadowing 16 students
- a total of 30 hours of classroom observation (in addition to time shadowing students)
- numerous informal observations in and around the school

- tours of the facility
- individual meetings with 32 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and the assessment of student learning
- group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers
- the examination of student work including a selection of work collected by the school

Each conclusion on the report was agreed to by visiting committee consensus. Sources of evidence for each conclusion drawn by the visiting committee appear in parenthesis in the Standards sections of the report. The seven Standards for Accreditation reports include commendations and recommendations that in the visiting committee's judgment will be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning and to better meet Commission Standards.

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

### **Overview of Findings**

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

## **Teaching and Learning at South Kingstown High School**

Teaching and learning is the focus of all community members at South Kingstown High School (SKHS). There is a profound partnership among the faculty, staff, students, and parents and a commitment to a student-centered school. The school's core values, beliefs, and expectations, The Rebel Way, are posted throughout the school building, included in the student handbook, and prominently featured on the school's website. A dynamic and collaborative process led to the creation of core values and beliefs that are embraced by the entire school community. Each department has identified which of the student learning expectations will be addressed in its curriculum, and for each expectation, the school has identified a targeted level of successful achievement in a school-wide rubric. The school has challenging and measurable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations for all students which address academic, civic, and social competencies, and are defined by analytic rubrics, which are used to identify achievement in proficiency-based graduation requirements. While the South Kingstown High School community has spent much time discussing and refining its core values, beliefs, and learning expectations, it has yet to establish a formal process for review of this document. The school communicates in an exemplary manner to students and families, as well as to the community, individual student achievement and school-wide achievement of the academic, civil, and social expectations in the mission.

The curriculum is purposefully designed to ensure that students practice and achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. In all courses and in the graduation portfolio, students engage in numerous opportunities to study, practice, and demonstrate proficiency in the school's academic, civic, and social student learning expectations. While many components of the curriculum at SKHS adhere closely to the indicators in the NEASC standard, others do not. Some units of study contain essential questions, concepts, content and skills, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, however, suggested instructional strategies and assessments that include

the school-wide analytic rubrics have yet to be incorporated into a common curriculum format. The proficiency-based graduation requirements offer many opportunities to emphasize depth of understanding and application of knowledge through inquiry and problem-solving. Faculty members collaborate formally to develop and revise curriculum during common planning time. There is no formal cycle of curriculum review and revision or formal program of cross-curricular instruction. Vertical articulation with the sending school and opportunities for authentic learning outside the school are lacking. The integration of technology into the curriculum is universal. The school provides personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and research.

Teachers' instructional practices support achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations by personalizing instruction, engaging students as active self-directed learners and in giving students time and training in reflection and self-assessment, and emphasizing inquiring, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills. Teachers provide students extra help to an exemplary degree. Teachers also collaborate during common planning time to review student work and to modify teaching strategies. Many have attained a high level of expertise in their content area. Teachers frequently integrate technology into instructional practice. The formal teacher supervision and evaluation process is in transition. The plan to phase out B-level courses will increase heterogeneity in classes but will also create instructional challenges requiring continued and increased focus on using formative assessments to adjust teaching strategies and greater use of differentiated instruction.

South Kingstown High School has a formal process to develop and implement the use of school-wide analytic rubrics to assess school-wide and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Assessment of the school's eight student learning expectations is embedded in the graduation portfolio that is a major requirement of the

proficiency-based graduation system. The school's professional staff effectively communicates individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to students and their families as well as to the school community. The school uses the web-based digital portfolio Richer Picture and SK series classes to communicate an individual's progress towards meeting proficiency on common course assessments and portfolio tasks to students and families. The professional staff collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement. Test data is used to place students in extra support classes such as Math Navigator and Numeracy and Literary Enhancement. While the school has already made efforts to work on formative assessments, it will need to increase that focus to modify curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of all students as the plan to phase out B-level classes is implemented.

South Kingstown High School is committed to seek continued accreditation in the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. In its self-study, the school evaluated the adherence of its programs to the teaching and learning standards. The accreditation visiting team adds its conclusions, commendations, and recommendations here to guide the school in its future efforts for improvement. The excitement that has marked students, teachers, parents, and administrators at SKHS is now being refocused. If the school secures adequate funding to meet its many challenges, the community will continue to enjoy the benefits of a student-centered, high achieving program.

### **Support of Teaching and Learning at South Kingstown High School**

The school community consciously builds a safe, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations. The school runs numerous programs such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, "School Success" Social Skills, and the pilot Response to Intervention begun for freshmen.

There is both a school resource officer and a student assistance counselor. The school is equitable and inclusive and fosters heterogeneity. While the gradual phase out of B-level courses will increase access to heterogeneously grouped classes for many students, the school still needs to insure access to such core classes for those students who are primarily in honors classes. In place at SKHS since the 2005-2006 school year, a formal advisory program helps to personalize the school experience for all students. In order to improve student learning, the principal and the professional staff engage in discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning through common planning time, teacher learning centers, and other formal professional development opportunities. The organization of time supports research-based instruction and promotes collaboration among teachers but inhibits the school's ability to engage students in authentic learning opportunities outside of school. Many, but not all, teachers provide input into the budget building process. The principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values and beliefs. Teachers, students, and parents are involved in meaningful roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership. Many teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school. The school committee and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school. The school committee, superintendent, and principal are collaborative and constructive in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. South Kingstown High School provides a wide variety of 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The SK100 series class informs all students about the school's core values and beliefs, the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, portfolio requirements, comprehensive course assessments, and standardized testing. Seniors mentor freshmen and assist with transition to the high school. Individual education plans, 504 plans, and personal literacy plans support identified and at-risk students. Other support strategies include positive behaviors and support, response to intervention, English

language learner assistance, and Wednesday morning tutoring. SKHS provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services. Support services use a wide variety of technology to deliver an effective range of services for each student. Guidance counselors deliver a written, developmental program and meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling. The guidance department provides outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers. Health services provide preventive health services and direct intervention services. They use ongoing relevant assessment data, including feedback from the community, to improve services and meet student needs. Library/media services are appropriately staffed and integrated into curriculum and instruction. Standardized tests administered in the library/media center limit student and staff access to the facility for several weeks of the school year, and, frequent use of the center's technology and resources by whole classes can limit drop-in access to services by individual students. Support services for identified students have an adequate number of staff members who collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff members, provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students, and use assessment data, including feedback from the community, to meet student needs.

One of South Kingstown High School's greatest strengths in the past has been the school committee's and community's provision of 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, and sufficient instructional materials and supplies. The recent downturn in the state's economy has resulted in a reduction of state aid from 22.3% of the entire budget in 2002 to 13% of the budget in 2011, a decrease of 7%. During the same period SKHS has implemented literacy, numeracy, writing support, and portfolio support classes to meet student needs created by new state mandates and graduation requirements. SKHS has added the position of proficiency-based

graduation requirements coordinator. The school must also administer Measure of Academic Progress testing. Budgets have been frozen each spring for the past six years. All of these programs require continuous funding so that the provision of dependable funding, a great strength of the school community in the past, now becomes one of its greatest challenges.

There is a high level of innovation by the maintenance and custodial staff that ensures the maintenance and repair of building. Despite cuts in state aid, there is long-range planning, and a strategic plan to address programs, staffing, and facility needs for 2011-2016 is being developed. There are plans for technology and a school improvement plan to address academic and behavioral needs of students. The school site and plant support the delivery of high quality programs and services, and there an exemplary ongoing effort to reach out and engage families with valuable information that helps them understand the educational, intellectual, and social development of their children. Various members of the school community indicate a need for SKHS to create more opportunities for students to participate in authentic learning outside of school. The major issue, however, is that the community and school board must continue to provide dependable funding to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.

### **School and Community Summary**

South Kingstown is located in Washington County at the southern end of the state of Rhode Island, approximately 32 miles south of Providence. South Kingstown High School is located in the village of Wakefield. The town also encompasses the villages of Kingston, Peacedale and West Kingston. South Kingstown is bordered on the west by the town of Charlestown, northwest by Richmond, north by Exeter and North Kingstown, and east by Narragansett. The southern border is formed by 5.5 miles of coastline along Block Island Sound on the Atlantic. The town covers an area of approximately 62.3 square miles.

South Kingstown's year-round population of just over 27,489 has a diverse and growing social composition. The town's population fluctuates over the course of the year because of the University population and summer tourism. According to 2008 U.S. Census Bureau estimates, South Kingstown is 91.6% White, 3.5% Asian, 1.8% Black or African American, 1.0% American Indian or Alaska Native, .3% other and 1.9% two or more races.

Historically, the University of Rhode Island, tourism, light industry, commercial fishing, and farming have been the economic mainstays for the town. Over the years, industry, fishing, and farming have been in perpetual decline. The median family income is \$70,989. In 2008, the percentage of population below the poverty line was 10%.

Over the past ten years school enrollment has slowly declined. In 1999, enrollment for SKHS was 1324. Currently, the enrollment is 1060. The breakdown by grade level is: 263 students in the 9th grade; 273 students in the 10th grade; 275 students in the 11th grade; and 249 students in the 12th grade. The attendance rate at SKHS is 93% which is slightly higher than the state average of 91%. Our two-year drop-out rate for the school years 08-09 & 09-10 was 1.2%. Of the 279 seniors in the class of 2009, 72.4% attended a four year college or university, 14.6% attended a two year college, 1% entered the military, 4% entered the work force and 1% took part in a community service program.

The per pupil expenditure for the 2008-2009 school year was \$16,082, which is 11% above the state average. Local resources account for 78% of the resources spent on public education. The state of RI contributes 13% of the resources and the federal government 4%. South Kingstown's tax rate is \$11.97 per \$1000 of assessed value of owner-occupied residential property and of those funds, 81% is spent on schools.

South Kingstown High School students benefit from the ties established with local colleges and universities. Eligible students in their senior year may participate in a dual enrollment program with the University of Rhode Island (located within 5 miles of the high school), Rhode Island College, Community College of Rhode Island, New England Institute of Technology and Johnson & Wales University. Additionally, there are several classes in which students are afforded the opportunity to earn college credits.

Students are recognized for their accomplishments in a variety of ways. Seniors are recognized at an annual Seniors Honors Night, in which they receive numerous scholarships and achievement awards. We also recognize our underclassmen at our annual underclassmen assemblies. Here they receive departmental excellence awards and other achievement awards and our juniors receive various college book awards. Students are inducted into the National and Rhode Island Honor Societies. Student athletes are honored annually at an athletic banquet. The World Language Department has an annual induction ceremony for the various language honor societies. And on a daily basis as part of our Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports program (PBIS) students are recognized for showing respect for self, others and school by the awarding of “Rebel Rings.”

# **School's Statement of Core Values and Beliefs and Learning Expectations**

## **The Rebel Way**

South Kingstown High School is proud to be a safe and respectful community of learners that recognizes and encourages the talents and potential of every student. We are committed to a rigorous curriculum that fosters and develops identified academic, civic, and social skills. The 21<sup>st</sup> century Rebel is an independent, critical thinker who effectively participates in our diverse community.

We believe students learn best, first and foremost, when they assume responsibility for their own learning. It is incumbent upon the learning community to support them by providing the following:

- clearly communicated expectations
- varied support structures for all learners
- authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school
- instruction that meets all students' needs
- 21<sup>st</sup> century learning tools
- opportunities to employ critical thinking skills
- timely and constructive feedback
- teachers who are knowledgeable in content and method
- a positive, safe, and supportive environment
- multiple opportunities to engage parents

### **Student Learning Expectations**

A1 All students will demonstrate critical thinking by acquiring & analyzing information, employing effective research skills, and using logic in problem solving.

- A2 All students will demonstrate effective communication skills by reading & writing critically for a variety of purposes, and speaking & listening accurately in a variety of settings.
- A3 All students will utilize technology effectively in research, communication, and/or design.
- A4 All students will demonstrate skills and accomplishments in the fine arts.
- C5 All students will demonstrate an understanding of human rights and diversity.
- C6 All students will demonstrate understanding of political, environmental, social, and economic issues that affect the present and future health of our community and world.
- S7 All students will demonstrate understanding of the connection between choices made and the physical, social, and emotional well-being of an individual and/or group.
- S8 All students will identify goals, set priorities, and manage their own progress.

**COMMISSION ON  
PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

**TEACHING AND LEARNING  
STANDARDS**

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CORE VALUES, BELIEFS,  
AND LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

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CURRICULUM

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INSTRUCTION

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ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR  
STUDENT LEARNING

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# 1 Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

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

1. The school community engages in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research-based best practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning.
2. The school has challenging and measurable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations for all students which address academic, social, and civic competencies and are defined by school-wide analytic rubrics that identify targeted high levels of achievement.
3. The school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, and district and school community priorities.

## **Conclusions**

The school community engages in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research-based best practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning. South Kingstown High School (SKHS) has developed the school's learning expectations over the last eight years. In the summer of 2010, South Kingstown High School formed a committee to examine changes that have taken place since the last accreditation and to ensure that the school's core values and beliefs are aligned with the existing student learning expectations. The committee felt that the existing mission statement did not reflect the core values or learning expectations required to promote 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills. The group kept a record of its progress through the process of formulating clear, meaningful, and measurable goals more closely aligned with the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century academic, civic, and social learning expectations. This committee included a variety of stakeholders including parents, students, guidance counselors, administrators, town council members, and a former assistant principal. The group met for two days in August 2010 to revise and refine the core values and beliefs statement. The committee used research-based data in the form of survey results from the Endicott Research Center taken June 30, 2010, which allowed 1,207 voices from the school community to be expressed. At the end of the two-day workshop, The Rebel Way, the school's statement of core values and beliefs was created. Feedback was solicited from faculty, parents, students, and the community, and The Rebel Way was refined prior to its official rollout. Teachers report that The Rebel Way clarified already existing values, beliefs, and expectations. Students demonstrate familiarity with the core values, student learning expectations, and the school's proficiency-based graduation requirements (PBGRs). The Rebel Way is published in the student handbook and the program of studies, is posted in many classrooms, and is prominently displayed in the welcoming statement from the principal on the school's online home page. Parents report only some familiarity with the core values and beliefs as expressed in The Rebel Way but state that they feel that their children are very well-versed in the core values

and beliefs. Parents also report that they are comfortable with the steps the school takes in familiarizing stakeholders with the core values and beliefs. As a result of the dynamic and collaborative process used to develop The Rebel Way, South Kingstown High School has a statement of core values and beliefs that is understood and embraced by the entire school community. (self-study, panel presentation, students, teachers, parents, school leadership)

South Kingstown High School has challenging and measurable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations for all students which address academic, civic, and social competencies, and are defined by analytic rubrics which are used school-wide to identify high levels of achievement in portfolio-based performance tasks. The school adheres to Rhode Island's diploma system requirements. Students must attain 24 Carnegie units and complete two proficiency-based graduation requirements (PBGRs): a minimum of eight comprehensive course assessments (CCAs) in four content areas and a digital portfolio containing English, mathematics, social studies, fine arts, and technology assignments that are aligned with the school's student learning expectations. Seniors collect letters of recommendation and present their portfolios to a faculty panel as part of the graduation requirement. All students must obtain a minimum score of two out of four in reading and math on the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) test. The diploma system is highly publicized and posted on the school web site. The school offers information nights four times per year for parents to explain the portfolio process. Students take a one-quarter class each year (the SK Series course) to work on portfolios. Courses across all disciplines offer at least one portfolio-worthy assignment per quarter that is evaluated by departmental rubrics matching up with the student learning expectations (SLEs), embedding and integrating that process into the curriculum. The portfolio requires competencies in a wide variety of areas aligned with the student learning expectations and emphasizes self-reflection. Teachers report and student work shows that there is extensive use of departmental rubrics related to the SLEs to evaluate student work that is rated as portfolio -worthy. However, while

each class uses school-wide rubrics for evaluating student work submitted to fulfill portfolio requirements, there is inconsistent use of school-wide rubrics to evaluate the many non-portfolio designated classroom assignments. Some rubrics, such as the constructive response rubric, the on-demand writing rubric, the group presentation rubrics, the expository writing rubric, the research essay rubric from the English language arts (ELA) department, and the PowerPoint presentation rubric from the technology department have been used by departments other than ELA and technology in the school to assess student work. The construction and wording of the rubrics is departmental and uses varying language for indicators of measurement. For example, the reflective essay analytic rubric uses a 4-point scale with levels of achievement labeled “exceeds standard” “meets standard” “nearly meets standard” and “below standard”, with a 0 category labeled “little or no evidence” while the commercial rubric uses a 1-4 point scale with no labels and no 0 category. The social studies oral presentation rubric uses a 0-4 scale and uses the labels “exemplary” “proficient” “developing” “beginning” and “no evidence.” Thus, the analytic language in identifying levels of proficiency is not consistent among rubrics. While the school extensively uses departmental rubrics school-wide to identify high levels of achievement in portfolio-worthy assignments, there is a lack of identified formal school-wide rubrics utilizing common descriptive terminology and quantitative measures for assessing routine, non-portfolio-based assignments. Consequently, students are not exposed to common objective terminology during assessment of their work, a practice which can lead to confusion about expectations and misunderstandings about the equity of grading across and within departments. (self-study, panel presentation, student work, teachers, student shadowing, parents)

The school’s core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school, drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in most classrooms, and guide the school’s policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations. The culture of SKHS reflects its core values and beliefs; a culture of respect is evident throughout the building. A

statement from the positive behavioral intervention and support program (PBIS) embodies the focus of respect: yourself, others, and school. Posters are displayed in most classrooms and hallways and painted on stair risers. The school is graffiti-free, and corridors and classrooms are clean and litter-free. The school has implemented a series of programs to ensure the potential of all students, and they are all given the opportunity to thrive. The freshman mentoring program provides a smooth transition to high school. The advisory program helps students to connect with adults on staff. Outreach to disenfranchised students is accomplished through electives, diverse clubs and activities, and the use of alternative learning programs. Discipline infractions are addressed through the PBIS behavior matrix. The mental health team provides a comprehensive approach for students in need of assistance with emotional issues or substance abuse. Access2Excellence targets athletes to promote a commitment to drug-free lifestyle and academic achievement. Special needs students are integrated into academic and social aspects of the school through The Rebel Café and vocational programs. Additionally, a transition academy, located on the University of Rhode Island campus, allows 18-21-year-old students with significant disabilities to interact with age-appropriate peers. School leaders regularly demonstrate their commitment to using the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations in decision-making and resource allocation. The principal models the importance of the advisory period by personally taking on students identified as at-risk. The school leadership team is committed to maintaining common planning time (CPT) and teacher learning communities (TLC). The principal reviews CPT logs, their TLC goals, and question sheets and provides teachers feedback. With the elimination of B-level classes, teachers have identified an increased need for professional development around differentiated instruction. School leadership has provided much of the already and is committed to providing more. Curriculum documents have been aligned with the SLEs, and there has been an increase the number of portfolio-worthy assignments. The weekly schedule gives teachers CPT in each department to collaborate, to gather and analyze data, and to review analytic rubrics. Professional development opportunities

emphasize a drive toward a more student-centered approach for learning as exemplified by the introduction of the workshop model for instruction. Technology is a critical component of 21<sup>st</sup> century goals and permeates the school. FirstClass software for e-mail, PowerTeacher for online grading, and SchoolMessenger for automated phone communication have improved communication throughout the school community for teachers and parents. Students are given multiple opportunities to use such technology throughout the curriculum as graphing calculators, and PowerPoint and PhotoStory to enhance presentations. Evidence of the school's commitment to being involved in the community is consistent and ubiquitous. Volunteers tutor at-risk students, community resources are utilized to help students with mental health and substance abuse problems, and a full-time school resource officer (SRO) works with students at the school in a variety of capacities. As a result of the many school-wide decisions and policies based on the core values and beliefs of the school, it is clear that The Rebel Way permeates the school building and culture, emphasizing the importance of collaboration, respect, and student achievement. (self-study, panel presentation, parents, teachers, students, student shadowing, leadership team)

The recently created statement of core values and beliefs is new, and the school has yet to create a formal plan to review and revise the document. However, the school regularly reviews and updates its 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations based on research and multiple data sources as well as district and school community priorities. The school's prior mission statement and articulated student learning expectations were revised in the summer of 2010. The Rebel Way, the statement of the school's core values and beliefs and the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations (SLEs) came out of that summer workshop. Feedback from the school community, including teachers, parents, students, and community members, was solicited and incorporated to revise the statement. Adherence to district beliefs was maintained. One academic year after the new data adopted was gathered from students and teachers via survey in the spring of 2011.

Overall, students indicate that they are satisfied or highly satisfied with the clearly communicated expectations, varied support structures for all learners, authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school, instruction that meets all students' needs, availability of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning tools, opportunities to employ critical thinking skills, timely and constructive feedback, knowledgeable teachers, a positive, safe environment, and multiple opportunities to engage parents. The self-study reports that the SLEs have been changed over eight years to better reflect what students need to know and be able to do as an SKHS graduate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A portfolio committee regularly reviews and revises the portfolio requirements which are designed around the SLEs. The SLEs are reviewed by the faculty annually, but there is no current formal plan for the review or revision of the core values and beliefs. Data collection continues, and the principal reports that the faculty has discussed the core values and beliefs in light of the survey results from the spring of 2011. TLCs have been established to promote collaboration and professional learning, and weekly CPT provides teachers with the opportunity to collaborate in content areas and to review departmental rubrics that are aligned with SLEs. Changes in policy such as the elimination of B-level classes (starting with the class of 2015) have been made in response to examination of the core values and beliefs. The school committee uses The Rebel Way to make policy decisions, and its members have described how the implementation of the drug-free lifestyles policy for athletes (Access2Excellence) was generated with the statement of core values and beliefs in mind. Thus, while the school regularly reviews its SLEs, the lack of a formal plan to review and revise its core values and beliefs hinders the school's ability to keep current in its dedication to maintaining a 21<sup>st</sup> century learning environment. (self-study, school board, school leadership team, teachers)

## **Commendations**

1. The dynamic, collaborative, and wholly inclusive process used by the school to develop the statement of core values and beliefs about learning

2. The student learning expectations that are clearly stated, communicated to the community, and fully embedded in the culture of the school community
3. The challenging 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations for all students which address academic, civic, and social competencies and are integrated into the school's performance based graduation requirements
4. The reflection of the school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations in the culture of the school, curriculum, instruction, policies, and decisions

### **Recommendations**

1. Develop, revise, and implement school-wide rubrics in all departments aligned with the student learning expectations that use common terminology to identify targeted levels of high performance on all assignments, including non-portfolio assignments
2. Develop and implement a formal plan and timeline for the review and revision of the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations that involves the collection of data from multiple sources and stakeholders

## 2

## Curriculum

*The written and taught curriculum is designed to result in all students achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations for student learning. The written curriculum is the framework within which a school aligns and personalizes the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
  - instructional strategies
  - assessment practices that include the use of school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics.
3. The curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through:
  - inquiry and problem-solving
  - higher order thinking
  - cross-disciplinary learning
  - authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school
  - informed and ethical use of technology.
4. There is clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum.
5. Effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation exist between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district.

6. Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are sufficient to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities.
7. The district provides the school's professional staff with sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research.

## Conclusions

Across the school, the curriculum is purposefully designed to ensure that students practice and achieve each of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. In all courses and in the graduation portfolio, students encounter numerous opportunities to study, practice, and demonstrate proficiency in the school's student learning expectations (SLEs) which reflect academic, social, and civic skills. Teachers purposefully discuss relevant SLEs with students who then demonstrate a working knowledge of the SLEs specific to the daily instructional lessons. Students have multiple opportunities throughout their high school experience to practice and demonstrate the SLEs. According to the Endicott Survey, 73% of the staff agrees that the curriculum reflects school-wide learning goals and expectations. Furthermore, 89% of parents indicates that the curriculum provides students with opportunities to achieve the school's learning expectations. A review of curriculum guides and student work also indicates that coursework is aligned with the SLEs and some departments have begun the process of aligning curriculum with the Rhode Island Common Core Standards. As a result of purposefully designed lessons and assessments within the curriculum, students have a thorough familiarity with and ample opportunity to achieve the SLEs. (self-study, Endicott Survey, student work, students, teachers, parents, curriculum guides)

The curriculum at SKHS is not written in a common format. Some units of study contain essential questions, concepts, content, and skills as well as 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, but they lack instructional strategies and incorporation of school-wide analytic rubrics as part of the suggested assessments. Some departments have begun the process of revision of the written curriculum, but, this process is not uniform throughout all departments, and not all curricula have undergone this comprehensive review. Teachers in each department informally collaborate to update curriculum documents, but no formal, systematic plan or procedure is currently in place to revise the written curriculum. Current high school course templates include elements such as

course descriptions, objectives, performance indicators, lists of formative and summative assessments, and student learning expectations. There is a separate written curriculum in each department, but the format and included elements vary greatly. The documents generally lack a suggested variety of instructional strategies and the use of school-wide rubrics as a suggested assessment written into the formal curricula. However, course-specific rubrics and analytical rubrics are included to assess student performance in the South Kingstown High School portfolio system. As a result of the lack of a common format and formal written process for the delivery of content, there is an inconsistency of pedagogy and assessment across disciplines and within departments. (Endicott Survey, school leadership team, teachers, student work, curriculum guides)

Frequently, the SKHS curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through inquiry and problem-solving, authentic learning inside of school, and the informed and ethical use of technology, but the current curriculum format and documents do not always emphasize higher order thinking or provide sufficient opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning or for authentic learning outside of school. Inquiry and problem-solving are imbedded in many areas of the curriculum through the school's proficiency-based graduation requirements (PBGRs), the portfolio, and the comprehensive course assessments. These structures promote and emphasize depth of understanding and application of knowledge at South Kingstown High School. Depth of knowledge and application of knowledge are also found regularly in projects such as the Rocket Project, Criminology Murder Scenes, Dante's Inferno Project, and the Dinner Party Project. Neither student shadowing, classroom observation, nor examination of student work reveals however, consistent examples of promotion of higher order thinking for all students in daily instruction. Cross-disciplinary learning takes place on an informal basis and must be created through individual teacher initiative independent of any formal building-wide effort. There is no formal program of inter-disciplinary learning within the written curriculum. Some

teachers informally incorporate into the curriculum cross-disciplinary experiences related to the nature of the content area and/or discipline. For example, a humanities course connects literature to art and history. Regular authentic learning opportunities exist in ELA, business, geometry, culinary arts, and auto mechanics, as when students are afforded some authentic learning opportunities that purposefully connect to real world scenarios with projects such as gardens in the agriculture program and small engine repair in auto mechanics. Students with significant disabilities run the ‘Rebel Café’ where guided by adults, students help purchase snacks, organize the inventory, sell snacks during advisory period, and make change for the customers. Authentic consistently timed learning opportunities outside of school are limited in large part by the rotating daily schedule. The informed and ethical use of technology is stressed in each curricular area, and all students are afforded the opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in technological literacy as part of their course of studies and through the digital portfolio system. The common course assessments in mathematics, ELA, science, and social studies are designed to ensure that all students are engaged in a curriculum that promotes depth of understanding and higher order thinking skills. The PBGR program’s emphasis upon applied learning skills requires depth of understanding for all students regardless of course level. An Internet access policy ensures an ethical approach to the use of technology. Thus, while there is an emphasis within the curriculum upon application of knowledge, higher order thinking skills, inquiry, and problem-solving, there are some inconsistencies in providing sufficient opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning and authentic learning outside of school. (Endicott Survey, student work, students, teachers, student shadowing, classroom observations, school leadership team, curriculum guides)

Often there is clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum. The school’s PBGR system ensures that most of the taught curriculum is aligned with the written curriculum.

Through common planning time (CPT) and teacher learning centers (TLC) teachers of common

courses are given the opportunity to discuss curriculum and delivery and to analyze data from sources such as the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) tests and the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests as well as the Dana Center Tool. However, alignment between written and taught curriculum units is inconsistent. The absence of a common format in curricular documents often results in teachers within the same departments varying their instructional and assessment strategies outside of the PBGR process. Essential questions are used by teachers only in some departments, and authentic opportunities within and across disciplines vary greatly. There is alignment between the written and taught curriculum in relation to the portfolio process and the common course assessments (CCAs), but the inconsistency of alignment in daily lessons and unit topics for non-portfolio work impedes the school's ability to insure that the written curriculum is what is actually taught. (Endicott Survey, teacher interview, teachers, school leadership team, curriculum guides)

There are often curricular coordination and vertical articulation within the high school's departments, but this is less so between academic areas, and curricular coordination and vertical articulation with the sending school is limited. Common planning time (CPT) is used to review and revise curriculum within departments but not interdepartmentally. Department chairs are responsible for review, development, and evaluation of curriculum in their content area. The SKHS Curriculum Committee is beginning the process of mapping the curricula in order to identify content and assessment in each subject and thus to uncover gaps and overlaps. Teachers also meet during teacher learning centers (TLCs) to work towards individual goals designed to improve student learning. Some teachers work on curriculum review and development during this time, but the practice is not common. Curriculum articulation with the middle school is inconsistent, varying by departments. For example, formal meetings between social studies teachers from the middle school and high school took place this past school year to discuss curriculum coordination and analyze data. Informal meetings have taken place between some,

but not all departments from both the middle and high school. Previously, there were twelve hours of embedded professional development where curriculum coordination and articulation were discussed, but recent changes in the teachers' contract have eliminated that program. Because of the inconsistent coordination and lack of vertical articulation of curriculum both between departments and with the sending schools, the school struggles to provide a curriculum that consistently meets the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning needs of all students. (central office personnel, teachers, teacher interviews, self-study)

Collectively, staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, and resources of the library/media center are sufficient in support of the curriculum, including co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. Some areas of the facility are sometimes insufficient in support of the curriculum, however. The library/media center is closed to classes for several weeks during the school year for the school's administration of standardized tests. The district and building administration have consistently supplied sufficient levels of instructional materials, equipment, and supplies to support the high school curriculum. The use of technology is widespread and is used on a regular basis by both teachers and students to support the delivery of the curriculum. Most academic areas, along with the digital portfolio component of the performance-based graduation requirement (PBGR), use technology to support the curriculum. While most departments have sufficient space in which to deliver the curriculum, the science department is currently limited in the number of science labs it can offer. Teachers have to take turns, share, and reduce the number of hands-on projects in order to support the science curriculum, and the plan to replace outdated science furniture with lab tables has been abandoned because of a lack of funds. Although staffing, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, and library/media center resources are sufficient to support the curriculum, the spatial limitations in the science department negatively affect teachers' ability to

provide regular authentic learning opportunities for all students. (self-study, teacher interview, teachers, school leadership team)

The South Kingstown School District provides the school's professional staff with moderate personnel, amounts of time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research. During the 2010-2011 school year, the high school's professional staff members responsible for the review and revision of the curriculum were the assistant superintendent, one assistant principal dedicated to curriculum coordination, and the department chairs. Some departments, such as mathematics and world language, were able to review, evaluate, and edit curriculum documents and course templates. This process was completed during the job-embedded professional development (JEPD) for the school year. At the end of the 2010-2011 school year, budget constraints forced the elimination of the position of the assistant principal/curriculum coordinator. Another recent development resulting from contract changes has been the elimination of the job-embedded professional development hours within the district. The school's self-study curriculum survey indicates that 52% of the faculty feels there is insufficient time provided for curriculum development and revision during and after the school day. Also, more than 75% of teachers indicates that their work on curriculum revision and development has taken place informally outside the school day on their own time. Thus the faculty at SKHS is already motivated to develop and revise curriculum in order to comply with the state standards and the SLE, and to provide students with high quality instruction. While some curriculum revision has already begun on a number of formal and informal levels, the districts' inconsistencies in the commitment of time and financial resources have caused limitations in the evaluation and revision of a curriculum reflective of current research and assessment data. (teacher interview, central office personnel, teachers, self-study, school leadership team)

## **Commendations**

1. The purposefully designed curriculum that provides a variety of opportunities for students to practice and achieve each of the school's student learning expectations
2. The program of proficiency-based graduation requirements that promotes depth of understanding for all students
3. The clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum related to the school's proficiency-based graduation requirements
4. Staffing levels, instructional materials, equipment, and supplies that generally support the curriculum
5. The many faculty members and administrators who work informally on curriculum evaluation, revision, and development
6. The regular integration of technology into the daily delivery of curriculum

## **Recommendations**

1. Design and implement for all curriculum a common format that includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content and skills, the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, instructional strategies, and assessment practices that include the use of school-wide and course-specific analytic rubrics
2. Provide formal opportunities including additional time and professional development for the faculty to review and update the written curriculum
3. Develop, adopt, and implement a formal curriculum review cycle
4. Provide additional and formal cross-curricular learning
5. Provide additional opportunities for authentic learning outside of school
6. Increase effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation between and among all disciplines and with the sending school in the district

7. Increase student access to science laboratory experiences to implement the science curriculum

# 3

## Instruction

*The quality of instruction is the single most important factor in students' achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
2. Teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations by:
  - personalizing instruction
  - engaging students in cross-disciplinary learning
  - engaging students as active and self-directed learners
  - emphasizing inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking
  - applying knowledge and skills to authentic tasks
  - engaging students in self-assessment and reflection
  - integrating technology.
3. Teachers adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by:
  - using formative assessment, especially during instructional time
  - strategically differentiating
  - purposefully organizing group learning activities
  - providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom.
4. Teachers, individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices by:
  - using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments
  - examining student work

- using feedback from a variety of sources, including students, other teachers, supervisors, and parents
  - examining current research
  - engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice.
5. Teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices.

## **Conclusions**

Teachers' instructional practices are often examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Many SKHS teachers examine their instructional practices in a variety of ways using Dana Center Protocol data, professional development time, common planning time (CPT), and teacher learning center (TLC) time. Evaluation of the Dana Center Classroom Protocol data facilitates examination of teaching practices and has led to discussion of instructional strategies during CPT and TLCs.

Professional development has included topics such as differentiated instruction, curriculum development and alignment, and the RIDE Evaluation Protocol through the East Bay Collaborative. While some time has been devoted to examination of instruction strategies, much CPT and TLC time has been focused on curriculum review and assessment, as well. Teachers frequently talk informally about instruction. The graduation portfolio process requires teachers to link their instructional practices to the school's core values and learning expectations. As a result, instructional practices are continuously examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. (teacher interview, teachers, self-study, school leadership team)

Most instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations by personalizing instruction, engaging students as active and self-directed learners, emphasizing inquiry and problem-solving, applying knowledge and skills to authentic tasks, engaging students in self-assessment and reflection, and integrating technology. Some practices engage students in cross disciplinary learning and higher order thinking. Teachers personalize instruction for students by frequently including small group work in classes, and students, parents, and teachers agree that teachers personalize instruction during class time. Some students are engaged in informal cross-disciplinary learning within classes such as in science, humanities, fine arts, culinary arts, and foreign language classes. While some teachers engage

students informally in thematic units, school-wide instruction is not planned around themes. Some teachers emphasize inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking either in their course instruction or portfolio tasks, but examination of student work, classroom observations, and student shadowing show inconsistent implementation of instructional strategies to promote higher order thinking and depth of knowledge. Students are sometimes engaged as active, reflective, and self-directed learners as when they are required to write formative reflective pieces for some projects entered into their portfolios, and all seniors write a summative reflection on their four-year educational experience. Some teachers require students to apply their knowledge and skills to authentic tasks, but there is no formal school-to-career program. Many teachers integrate technology into their instruction through the use of LCD projectors, document cameras, computer labs, and Web 2.0 technologies. As a result, many instructional practices lead to the achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. However, instruction that promotes higher order thinking, application of knowledge and skills to authentic tasks, and cross-disciplinary learning take place less frequently. Thus, the school is able to insure that the learning style needs of many, but not all, students are met. (classroom observations, students, student work, teacher interview, school leadership team, self-study, Endicott Survey, parents)

Occasionally, 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. There are inconsistencies in the use of instructional practices to meet the needs of all students, however, although differentiated instruction is a growing area of need resulting from the elimination of B-level classes. Classroom observations, shadowing, and teacher interviews confirm, too, a need for more frequent use of formative assessments to adjust instruction in the classroom. Classroom observations, shadowing, and meetings with students produced numerous instances of teacher-centered and

lecture-driven instruction. Teachers do provide an exemplary quantity of extra help to students outside of the classroom setting. Teachers meet frequently with students before and after school as well as during advisory period. Thus, the lack of school-wide use of formative assessment and differentiation of instruction are the significant factors that hinder the school's ability to meet the learning needs of all students. (classroom observations, student interviews, teacher interviews, self-study)

Most teachers, individually and collaboratively, strive to improve their instructional practices by: using student achievement data from a variety of summative assessments; examining student work; using feedback from a variety of sources, including students, other teachers, and supervisors; examining current research; and engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice. There is no formal use of parent input to inform instructional practices. Teachers look at summative assessments and student work through CPT and TLC time and examine curricular and assessment tools. Data analysis and current research about pedagogy are constantly used to modify instructional practices and to promote effective student learning. Teacher feedback is primarily informed by other teachers during CPT and TLC time. Few parents (10.6%) in the Endicott Survey, report that they are able to provide feedback on teachers' instructional practices. Many students (57%) report that their teachers ask them about ideas and comments to improve how they teach. Additionally, teachers receive feedback from supervisors in the form of Dana Center Walkthroughs data. Teachers are engaged in examining current research and in professional discourse focused on instructional practice. The TLC and CPT logs provide support that teachers are committed to the process of looking at instructional practices such as curriculum alignment, CCAs, and portfolio tasks. As a result, instructional practices are informed through the use of data, reflection, and professional discourse, and the addition of a formal mechanism for may add further dimension to the progress. (teacher interview, self-study, school leadership team, Endicott Survey)

Teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. Teachers stay current in their fields in a variety of ways. They participate in workshops, courses, and graduate degree programs. Both CPT and TLC activities provide teachers with opportunities to be reflective about their instructional practices and assessments. As a result, SKHS teachers are adult learners and reflective practitioners, working to maintain expertise in their content area. (self-study, teacher interview, school leadership team)

### **Commendations**

1. The continuous examination of instructional practices to ensure consistency with the school's core values and beliefs
2. The instructional practices that personalize and enhance instruction
3. The integration of technology into instructional strategies
4. The engagement of teachers in professional development regarding content area knowledge
5. The extensive provision of extra help to students beyond the regular classroom by teachers

### **Recommendations**

1. Increase use of formative assessments in instructional strategies
2. Increase use of differentiated instruction in classes
3. Provide formal opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning
4. Increase instructional strategies that promote higher order thinking for all students
5. Increase opportunities for students to apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks

6. Develop and implement a formal procedure to increase parent feedback to adjust instructional strategies

# 4

## Assessment of and for Student Learning

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

1. The professional staff continuously employs a formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
2. The school's professional staff communicates:
  - individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to students and their families
  - the school's progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed.
5. Prior to summative assessments, teachers provide students with the corresponding rubrics.
6. In each unit of study, teachers employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments.
7. Teachers collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments.

8. Teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work.
9. Teachers regularly use formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning.
10. Teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice, including all of the following:
  - student work
  - common course and common grade-level assessments
  - individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
  - standardized assessments
  - data from sending schools, receiving schools, and post-secondary institutions
  - survey data from current students and alumni.
11. Grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning.

## Conclusions

The professional staff continuously employs a formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. South Kingstown High School uses a digital portfolio system containing graded pieces that satisfy the requirements for each of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Assessment of these portfolio tasks and/or common course assessments (CCA) utilize school-wide rubrics aligned with the student learning expectations (SLE) and the appropriate Rhode Island Grade Span Expectations and/or national content standards as required by the Rhode Island Department of Education. Each SLE has a set of validated assignments that are assessed by common, departmental rubrics that directly reflect the requirements of each 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectation. For example, all science lab reports are assessed using the same departmental rubric. Student learning expectations which allow for student choice of a self-generated project or a previously graded portfolio-worthy assignment from different courses all contain assignments graded by various school-wide rubrics. Student Learning Expectation S8 (all students will identify goals, set priorities, and manage their own progress) requires the completion of the portfolio, an individual learning plan (IEP), and two recommendations from adults that document responsible participation in the community. Their presentation of the portfolio SLE is assessed by the oral presentation rubric. As a result, the digital portfolio as a graduation requirement demonstrates whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, teacher interview, students, teachers, parents)

The school's professional staff communicates individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to students and their families. The staff also communicates the school's progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to the school community. Information regarding individual student progress toward meeting

proficiency is communicated to students and their families through the school's web-based digital portfolio Richer Picture, which provides continuous access to South Kingstown High School's eight student learning expectations, the student's assignments (which demonstrate achievement of these expectations), student scores, formative reflections, and teacher comments. In addition, the SK series of classes contain benchmarks toward meeting proficiency. Student progress toward these benchmarks is communicated to students and parents through the student's course grade and the SKHS yearly portfolio parent night presentations. Also, information is provided to parents and students via traditional report cards as well as through ParentConnect, a web-based program that provides parents with continuous access to student grades. The school also provides feedback and rubrics for student work, letters home, parent-teacher conferences, individualized education plans and evaluation team meetings, telephone contact, and e-mail. The school's progress toward achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations is also communicated through many functions during the school year, such as back-to-school-night, 8<sup>th</sup> grade orientation, and 9<sup>th</sup> grade parent night. During portfolio nights held four times per year, parents and community members learn about the graduation requirements. In addition, The South Kingstown High School's guidance department has extended office hours until 6:15 p.m. every other Wednesday evening to provide parent support for a variety of needs including how students are progressing towards meeting their 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Therefore, South Kingstown High School's effective and consistent methods of communicating individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations provide students, their families, and the school community multiple opportunities to become familiar with the expectations of the school and to track individual student progress toward these expectations. (self-study, teachers, department leaders, student work, parents, school committee, students)

The professional staff at South Kingstown High School collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement. Student achievement data is collected at the whole school level through Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing, New

England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) testing, and content course grades (D/F list). Data based on student behavior is collected through the Positive Behavioral Intervention System (PBIS) and the school's student information system that houses discipline, attendance, and tardy records. The faculty is given the D/F list and the attendance/tardy data several times per year to review. Individual departments collect and analyze content-based data derived from common summative assessments and common portfolio tasks during common planning time (CPT). The data from the math section of the MAP test, NECAP scores, and teacher recommendations are used to place students in Math Navigator and Numeracy, two classes designed to support struggling math students. Students are placed in Literacy Enhancement, a class supporting students struggling with reading, based on 8<sup>th</sup> grade NECAP, Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests, and MAP scores as well as classroom performance. Students are placed in this class based upon teacher recommendations, portfolio deficiencies, MAP testing data, and NECAP scores. A new writing support class has been established to meet the needs of students writing below grade level. Along with the department changes mentioned above, teachers communicate with parents and suggest Wednesday morning tutoring support, offer after school help, monitor student progress through advisory, refer students to the pilot Response to Intervention (RTI) program (ninth grade only), or participate in a PBIS Check In/Check Out process. As a result, the collection, disaggregation and analysis of data facilitate the discussion of achievement gaps and inform decisions in scheduling of students and the creation or elimination of courses. (self-study, teachers, school leadership team, central office personnel, department leaders)

Prior to each unit of study, some South Kingstown High School teachers communicate to students the school's applicable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed. According to the Endicott Survey, 63% of students and 68% of teachers agree that teachers explain the learning expectations before each unit of study. However, when discussing how learning expectations and unit-specific learning goals are

communicated at the start of a unit, many students explain that teachers communicate details about which student assessments will apply to their graduation portfolio for specific SLEs rather than stating what students are expected to know and be able to do prior to each unit of study. The Endicott Survey results support this observation, stating that 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations are primarily communicated to students through the assignment of portfolio tasks and common course assessments. Teachers also report that communication of learning expectations depends greatly on the department. Many English classes utilize essential questions in thematic classes. The social studies department utilizes packets and syllabi which communicate learning expectations. Still, some teachers do not communicate the learning expectations at the beginning of a unit. Thus, all, students are not consistently made aware of what they will be expected to know and do at the start of a unit. (Endicott Survey, self-study, student shadowing, teachers, students)

Prior to summative assessments, teachers provide students with corresponding school-wide or course-specific rubrics that will be used to assess learning. According to the Endicott Survey, almost 100% of teachers provides the corresponding rubric to students when a long-term assignment is given. Parents are able to look at the rubrics to see why a student achieved a certain grade, and it has been noted that students sometimes use the rubrics to peer edit their work. Across the school, students consistently report that they have been provided rubrics for summative assessments. Rubrics are also used in peer feedback activities, thereby providing opportunities for students to become familiar with the school rubrics. All observed student work samples utilized rubrics. According to the Endicott Survey, 65% of students agrees that they understand in advance what work they have to accomplish in order to meet teachers' expectations for assignments. As a result, students understand a teacher's expectation for a given summative assessment. (students, teachers, parents, student work, Endicott Survey)

In each unit of study, some teachers at South Kingstown High School employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments. The self-study indicates that the majority of teachers uses a number of traditional summative assessment strategies within their own classrooms, including tests, presentations, projects, essays, and mid-term and final exams. Both classroom observations and student work samples support this conclusion. While there is a variety of summative assessments used at the school, fewer examples of formative assessment have been observed. Some students report that material is taught and tested before a teacher moves on to new content. The Endicott Survey shows that fewer than half the faculty uses formative assessments regularly: 18% of teachers uses of formative assessments daily while 33% uses formative assessments several times a week. Teachers indicate that more professional development is needed to familiarize them with varying forms and uses formative assessment. As a result, some, but not all, teachers utilize formative assessment consciously and regularly in their classrooms to inform instruction and improve student learning and this beneficial practice can be extended with provision of professional development. (Endicott Survey, teachers, students, student shadowing, student work, classroom observations)

Teachers collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of summative assessments, including common assessments. Teachers have common planning time (CPT) once per week on Wednesday mornings for forty-five minutes at the beginning of the school day. Teachers discuss, improve, and analyze the results from summative and common assessments and use this time to develop and revise comprehensive course assessments as well as midterm and final exams. Many teachers also collaborate to create and revise common tasks, such as portfolio projects or science labs. In addition to CPT, the guidance department facilitates collaboration between teachers by scheduling together when possible the non-teaching periods of those who teach common courses or who teach collaboratively. As a result, collaboration has led to widespread creation, analysis, and revision of summative and common assessments, but, to a

lesser degree, to creation of formative assessments. (teachers, self-study, department leaders, classroom observations)

Teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure that students revise and improve their work. Rubrics are widely used to provide feedback to students. Students indicate that all of their teachers provide rubrics to assess their work and that most teachers provide helpful feedback. Furthermore, most students agree that if “they [students] were willing to put in the work, teachers would always help them to do better”. Some students mention that their teachers review concepts in response to student trends in tests or quizzes. Many English teachers use peer revision. In addition, all teachers provide one assignment that serves as a graduation portfolio opportunity per quarter, and students and teachers are both clear that students are able to improve their work based on feedback for any assignment that could be used for their graduation portfolio. As a result, students are able revise and improve their work across disciplines. (student work, students, teachers, self-study, teacher interview)

Some teachers use formative assessment to inform and adapt instruction. According to an assessment survey, teachers have changed instruction to include such practices as grouping, graphic organizers, student-centered presentations, incorporating technology, and inquiry-based discussion. The school has placed an emphasis upon the use of formative instruction in the past. Two years ago, department chairs read *Common Formative Assessments* by Ainsworth and Viegut, and additional professional development focused on a coaching model. Department chairs used the coaching model to instruct department members in the use of various instructional practices including formative assessment. Continued conversation about formative assessment has taken place in some teacher learning centers but not all. Teachers point out that the elimination of B-level classes creates a current and increased need for the review of

instructional practices. As a result, some informal use of formative assessments informs instruction. (self-study, student shadowing, teachers)

Teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning, including the following: student work; common course and common grade-level assessments; individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations; standardized assessments; data from sending schools; and survey data from current students for the purpose of systematically revising curriculum, but not to the same degree for improving instructional practices. Assessment information is reviewed both formally and informally across the school and district. The assistant superintendent disaggregates and analyzes data from yearly NECAP testing in order to determine gaps and inequities in student achievement at both the district and school level. In addition, school-level administrators regularly review multiple sources of data, including the NECAP results. These reviews recently resulted in changes in the curriculum, notably the elimination of B-level classes beginning in the ninth grade. This change was reviewed and supported by the school committee. Furthermore, district-level administrators support the opportunity for the middle school and high school department heads to share data, including NECAP and NWEA scores, in order to identify students entering South Kingstown High School who would benefit from extra supports, such as specific courses, in the ninth grade. Further curricular changes have resulted from teacher collaboration during common planning time. For example, the science department has responded to observed gaps in curriculum alignment detected through the NECAP test by creating pacing guides and common assessments for all core classes. As a result, students are now required to take a minimum of one semester of chemistry and physical science. Department chairs review curriculum alignment data to determine gaps in curriculum and assessment. Teachers across the school also collaborate during common planning time by examining multiple types of student assessments including student work for graduation portfolios, comprehensive course

assessments, NECAP results, and course grades/credits often resulting in revisions to curriculum, assignments, assessment, and rubrics. While evidence of student learning is used consciously to revise curriculum, school leaders note that the next step is for the conversation to turn to revising instructional practices. As a result, across the school, on-going revisions to curriculum are made in response to a range of evidence for student learning; however, the same systematic improvements to instructional practices have yet to be made in response to the data collected. (self-study, central office personnel, school leadership, school board, teachers)

Grading and reporting practices are reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. Seventy-five percent of teachers agree that grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised. Many teachers indicate they use common planning time to calibrate graded assessments. In some cases, multiple teachers grade one assignment as a check of consistency, and a discussion of this procedure was observed between teachers during common planning time as well as evidence of this practice found in student work samples. Students are made aware of grading practices in class syllabi and, in some cases, by viewing them on teacher web pages. Parents and students report that rubrics for summative assessments state clearly what students are to do and that this has improved since the onset of common planning time. According to the Endicott Survey, however, only 58 % of students feels that teacher grading is fair and consistent. Students report that grading practices are inconsistent across the school. As a result, the inconsistency across disciplines hinders students' full understanding of teachers' expectations, and measures should be taken to resolve this. (Endicott Survey, self-study, teachers, students, school support staff, student work)

## **Commendations**

1. The school's effective and consistent methods of communicating individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations

2. The collection, disaggregation and analysis of data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement
3. The widespread use of rubrics distributed prior to summative assessments
4. The provision of timely, corrective feedback for students to revise and improve their work
5. Consistent care to maintain the portfolio and standards-based assessment systems.

## **Recommendations**

1. Ensure that all teachers, prior to each unit of study, communicate to students the school's applicable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed
2. Increase the use of formative assessments in instruction to further inform and adjust instructional practices
3. Increase collaboration to create, analyze, and revise formative assessments
4. Provide additional professional development to integrate formative assessments into instructional practices
5. Expand data analysis to include the improvement of instructional practices
6. Review grading practices consistently to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning

## **SUPPORT STANDARDS**

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**SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP**

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**SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**

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**COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**

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# 5

## School Culture and Leadership

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

1. The school community consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all.
2. The school is equitable, inclusive, and fosters heterogeneity where every student over the course of the high school experience is enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core course (English/language arts, social studies, math, science, or world languages).
3. There is a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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 committee, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
12. The school committee and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school.

## **Conclusions**

The South Kingstown school community provides a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all. The Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) at South Kingstown is a tiered behavioral program that provides a clearly defined set of positive behavioral expectations for students, teachers, parents, administrators, and staff. The “School Success” Social Skills program provides an additional layer of support in which students who are performing poorly in the classroom are identified and recommended for weekly support at group meetings. The Response to Intervention (Rti) pilot program is its initial phase for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Eventually, it will offer a tiered set of academic supports for all students who demonstrate at-risk behaviors. Proactive measures also include a full-time school resource officer (SRO), who provides informal counseling and legal information for students, a school social worker, 1.5 school psychologists, and a student assistance counselor (SAC) who runs tolerance and diversity programs to assist students who have been identified for complex emotional and social issues. Thus, this expansive support system provides the necessary umbrella to assist all students in their development and achievement of personal and academic learning goals. (students, teacher interview, parent meetings, Endicott Survey)

South Kingstown High School is equitable, inclusive, and fosters heterogeneity. Many, but not all students, over the course of their high school experience are enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core course (English/language arts, social studies, math, science, or world languages). Efforts to group students heterogeneously are evident and continuous. All courses are aligned with the Rhode Island Grade Span Expectations (GSEs) and national content standards and offer all students a guaranteed and viable curriculum. Many core courses are heterogeneously grouped in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and in electives. All B-level courses will be phased out by 2014. The district has provided teachers some training on differentiation of instruction. A five-

day workshop was offered during the summer of 2011, and some faculty members have attended conferences dealing with differentiation of instruction. Students are also provided the opportunity to enroll in college level and advanced placement courses as long as the prerequisites are met. Beginning in the school year 2006-2007, collaborative classes taught by both regular and special education teachers have been available to all students. Collaborative classes are offered in the four content area courses: English, math, science, and social studies. Thus, some students who are enrolled in accelerated honors classes for all of their high school career do not have the opportunity to experience at least one heterogeneously grouped core class although the eventual elimination of the B-level classes will result in South Kingstown High School providing equity and access to the core curriculum for most students. (self-study, panel presentation, teacher interview, school leadership)

There is a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Advisories, in place since the 2005-2006 school-year, take place every Tuesday and Thursday for twenty-eight minutes. During this time, advisors provide information on school-wide activities, civic responsibilities, school social expectations, and, at times, academic goals. Upperclassmen mentors have recently been included with the freshman advisories, providing support and further orientation activities. Students and parents clearly support the claim that there is, in addition to the guidance counselor, an adult in the school community whom their child can trust. Clubs, class activities, sports teams, and community projects offer students the opportunity to connect with school personnel on additional personal levels. The school has one full-time social worker, a full-time school psychologist, a part-time school psychologist, and a full-time student assistance counselor who provide more formal individual and group support. Furthermore, the school nurse is available for medical attention or for some emotional support if needed. In addition, office and clerical

staff (i.e. clerical attendance, main, and guidance office personnel) are available to assist during the day, some even taking on the responsibility of being class advisors. The administrative team is very visible and accessible providing student support on a daily basis. The principal has undertaken responsibility for his own advisory of at-risk students. As a result of both formal and informal school efforts, students are involved with many supportive professionals throughout their high school careers. (students, Endicott Survey, parents, teacher interview)

In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff of South Kingstown High School engage in discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning within and across disciplines. Through weekly common planning time (CPT), teachers within disciplines collaborate to analyze and update curriculum and analyze data (i.e. the Dana Center Walkthrough Data, summative assessments, Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress, (NWEA-MAP) testing data, New England Common Assessment Program, (NECAP) scores). CPT agendas include discussions on common summative assessments and some common formative assessments. The outcomes of this work are listed in the common planning logs, with comments made by the central administration staff. Across disciplines, teachers meet in teacher learning centers (TLC) to support individual goals connected to student learning. There are opportunities for collaborative work as well. Some of the focus of this work includes: common school-wide expectations for students, some shared best practice strategies that directly connect to the classroom, and an increase in collegiality. Teachers also read articles and participate in protocols connected to improving student learning. Another support vehicle that focuses on improved student learning takes place through the new teacher mentor program. Within this program, new teachers meet monthly with more experienced co-workers to discuss best practices and gain better understanding of high school processes. However, professional development days of more recent years have focused on educating the faculty on federal and state mandates, including portfolio

presentation days which are a piece of the state's proficiency-based graduation requirements (PBGR) plan. Thus, this concentrated focus of professional development upon federal and state mandates limits necessary attention to other areas such as curriculum, instruction, and assessment. (self-study, panel presentation, teacher interview, central office personnel, Endicott Survey)

School leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning. Upon their hiring, all district administrators are trained in the supervision and evaluation process based on a model adopted by the South Kingstown School Department. Administrators are part of a statewide and national organization including National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and Rhode Island Association of School Principals (RIASP) where the concepts of supervision and evaluation are regular topics for discussion. Currently, the evaluation process is under discussion for redesign that will be in place for the upcoming school year. Under the previous evaluation process, tenured teachers are observed every-other-year and new, non-tenured teachers are formally evaluated by the principal three times per year. Observations consist of both formal and informal meetings with teachers having the option of attending a post observation meeting that provides the teacher with feedback concerning their strengths and weaknesses. Department chairs conduct informal walk-throughs, using a check list to collect data to determine instructional strengths and weaknesses in the school. That general information is shared with the staff by the administration. Therefore, the supervision and evaluation method that has been in place, as well as the newly designed one, focus on improved student learning. (teacher interview, central office administration, school leadership team, self-study, department leaders)

The organization of time at South Kingstown High School supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of students in many areas.

South Kingstown High School currently employs a six-period day in a seven-day cycle. The school day begins at 7:30 a.m. and ends at 2:02 p.m. Classes meet on Mondays and Fridays for 56 minutes, except during the lunch period, which meets for 64 minutes. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, classes meet for 51 minutes to provide time for a 28-minute Advisory period that is provided for the students. On Wednesdays, time has been provided during the first period for teachers to meet departmentally for Common Planning Time. The department chair guides the work in CPT with weekly feedback from the principal. Thus, the organization of time promotes professional collaboration among teachers that provides opportunities for creation of common assessments, review and revision of exams, and shared expectations for students. However, the current schedule, which rotates a class period out each day, inhibits opportunities for students to participate in authentic learning and school-to-work experiences outside of school. (self-study, panel presentation, parents, students, teacher interview, school leadership team)

Student load and appropriate class size provide teachers with time to meet the learning needs of individual students. South Kingstown's professional contract addresses individualized learning by specifying the maximum number of students per teacher: "full-time high school teachers shall be assigned a maximum of 130 pupils per day". Class load and class sizes enable teachers to provide sufficient attention to the needs of all students. To that end, the contract also states: "No individual class shall exceed 27 pupils." Support courses are offered as interventions to improve student writing and literacy and/or numeracy skills. South Kingstown High School provides enhancement classes to provide further instruction to those students who have demonstrated need in these areas of learning. Students are placed in the Numeracy and Literacy Enhancement classes based on NWEA-MAP and NECAP test scores as well as teacher recommendation. Students in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade are placed in the Writing for Success course based on their NECAP scores. For further support for struggling students, the class cap for the Numeracy and Writing for Success classes is twenty students, and the Literary Enhancement cap is ten students.

Using the co-teaching model, regular education teachers work with special education teachers to provide instruction to meet the learning needs of individual students. Inclusion classes do not exceed eighteen students, with a maximum of eight IEP students per class. Thus, efforts are made to reduce class size, personalize instruction, and provide additional support to scaffold instruction and provide learning opportunities for all students. (Endicott Survey, teacher meeting, students, parents, classroom observation)

The principal at South Kingstown High School, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. Teachers, parents, and central office personnel concur that when the current principal arrived at South Kingstown High School six years ago, he immediately began to engage teachers, parents, and students in conversations about how teaching and learning occurred at the school. These conversations began during the summer of his arrival, and they continue to the present time. The principal has implemented and used a number of committees, including an advisory committee, a portfolio committee, a positive behavior intervention and supports (PBIS) committee, and a school improvement team. Moreover, the principal has initiated the development of teacher learning communities (TLC), promoted use of common planning time, and developed a freshman mentoring program. With the implementation of TLCs, the principal has utilized teacher leaders in the building and also solicited input and ideas for new initiatives and programs. When new programs, courses, rules, policies, or procedures are introduced, the principal insists that the developers ensure that the new program is aligned with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. The school's core values, The Rebel Way, have been referenced as a common theme in driving decision-making as it pertains to teaching and learning. It is not uncommon for the principal to have informal meetings with students to discuss classroom experiences. During underclassmen assemblies, honors banquets, and the acknowledgement of academic achievement on morning announcements, the principal

emphasizes to students that their learning is paramount. The principal also serves on the senior portfolio review and advises at-risk students through his own advisory group. In addition, the principal communicates via the school website, his principal blog, parent list-serve, automated phone messages, and Parent Connect to inform parents about student progress, school opportunities and events. Thus, throughout the school culture, the principal's instructional leadership and support of the core values is clearly focused and pervasive. (self-study, panel presentation, teacher interview, central office personnel, Endicott Survey, parents, teachers, students)

Teachers, students, and parents are involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership. The Rebel Way was created through discussions that led to the development of the new mission statement in 2010. Focus groups comprised of members of the town council, the superintendent, the school principal, teachers, parents, and representatives of the student body were part of that process. As a core value, the concept of parents as partners in the education of their children along with the concept of students as active participants in their education requires that all stakeholders come together to make decisions. As indicated by the Endicott Survey, more than half of all parents, students, and staff members at South Kingstown High School feels they have input in important decision-making. Parents report that communication is open and the administration and teachers are accessible for any conversations about instruction, learning, and assessment for their students. Students express a similar sentiment. Parent involvement also includes participation in the parent-teacher group (PTG), the South Kingstown Educational Foundation (SKEF), and the South Kingstown Connecting All Resources for Educational Support (SK CARES). The South Kingstown Partnership for Prevention is another vehicle for parent and community involvement. Faculty members are involved in many committees focused on teaching and learning such as the mentoring program for new teachers and the curriculum committee. Department chairs meet

frequently with administrators and promote two-way communication between the faculty and administrators. Teachers also act as facilitators on professional development days. The portfolio committee creates guidelines and implements changes for the South Kingstown High School Portfolio Graduation Requirements. The advisory committee designed the structure of the student advisory program. The opportunities for student involvement include, but are not limited to, participation in student council, Access to Excellence, PBIS. An additional student government group is in the planning stages. Thus, there is a multitude of opportunities for all stakeholders to become involved with the school, both in supporting and decision-making roles. (Endicott Survey, teachers, parents, students, self-study, school leadership team, department leaders)

Teachers at South Kingstown High School exercise initiative and leadership skills essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. Common planning time logs provided by all departments indicate that teacher input to the school improvement process related to learning is in place and ongoing. This leadership goes beyond the classroom to the various advisory roles teachers fulfill in sports, academic clubs, academic competitions, community projects, and grade level activities. SKPades (a junior class variety show), and SK Makeover Day (a day in which the entire student body and faculty devote to improving the aesthetics of the campus and the nearby community) are examples of leadership beyond the classroom. Thus, the continuation of the rich traditions as well as the improvement of teaching and learning at South Kingstown High School is in place under the leadership and commitment of the principal. (self-study, panel presentation, teachers, department leaders, school leadership)

The school committee, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The superintendent and

principal have monthly meetings to discuss and reflect upon current school initiatives. As vested members of the community, the school committee meets monthly with the superintendent and administration. Some of its members have had long terms of service and are intimately involved with local education at the college and university level as well. Videotaped meetings are available both on the web and on public access television. Interviews with both the school committee and the superintendent indicate that they perceive strong support and respect for the programs and administration of the high school. The school committee looks to the district administration for their guidance, leadership and implementation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectation, while it concentrates on outcomes, policy, and the budget. The self-study cites an example of collaboration when the school committee, superintendent, and school administrators met last June to discuss and finalize the schools Access to Excellence (A2E) policy. Because of this positive supportive, relationship, among the district leadership team, the principal and superintendent, pending funding, have the ability to implement procedures that will continue to enhance the achievement of the learning expectations at the high school. (school board, central office administrators, Endicott Survey, self-study)

The school committee and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school. The principal of the high school, as well as other principals in the district, have site-based authority over items such as: P-Accounts (funds available to a building principal for equipment and supplies), human capital management, program decision-making, care and control of student management, scheduling, and daily operations. The superintendent and the South Kingstown High School Principal are collaborative partners in problem-solving, forecasting, and planning. The superintendent seeks the principal's input and gives him authority to issues involving site-based budgets, hiring and evaluating staff members, and student placement decisions. The principal has a voice in all of South Kingstown High School procedures. He has been given the autonomy to determine where cuts will be made in the budget.

Thus, the principal has the authority to make informed decisions that support teachers and learning for all students. (self-study, panel presentation, central office personnel, school leadership team, parents, teachers, department leaders)

### **Commendations**

1. The comprehensive approach to student support that provides multiple opportunities for students to succeed with appropriate interventions as needed
2. The plan to phase out B-level classes to ensure that many students will be enrolled in heterogeneously grouped core courses (English/language arts, social studies, math, science, or world languages) during their high school career
3. The Leadership provided by the principal that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
4. The collaborative leadership provided by the principal that ensures that teachers, students, and parents are involved in meaningful roles that promote responsibility and ownership
5. The positive working relationship among the school committee, central office administration, and high school administration that leads to achievement and attainment of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
6. The autonomy provided the principal to lead the school to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
7. The common planning time and teacher learning centers (TLCs) that provide teachers opportunities for collaboration
8. The use of assessment data to determine student need for support classes for students who have demonstrated needs in the areas of writing, literacy, and numeracy
9. The class loads and sizes that enable teachers to personalize learning

10. The abundance and variety of co-curricular activities that promote student ownership and pride in the school

### **Recommendations**

1. Develop and implement a plan to improve student learning through engaging teachers across disciplines in discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning
2. Increase opportunities for students to participate in authentic learning such as a school-to-career program
3. Involve all students in at least one heterogeneously grouped class in a core subject area

# 6

## School Resources for Learning

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

1. The school has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, that support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.
2. The school provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services.
3. Support services staff use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student.
4. School counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
  - deliver a written, developmental program
  - meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling
  - engage in individual and group meetings with all students
  - deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers
  - use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

5. The school's health services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
  - provide preventative health services and direct intervention services
  - use an appropriate referral process
  - conduct ongoing student health assessments
  - use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.

## Conclusions

South Kingstown High School provides a wide variety of 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. All students take the one quarter, SK100 series class which provides students with knowledge and understanding of the school's diploma system, including the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations (SLEs), portfolio requirements, comprehensive course assessments (CCAs), New England Common Assessment Program testing (NECAP), and the school's core values and beliefs called The Rebel Way. Each student is also assigned to a guidance counselor and meets twice per week with an advisor. In addition, the freshman mentoring program pairs seniors with incoming 9th graders to assist them in their transition to the high school. Individual education plans (IEPs), 504 plans, and personal literacy plans (PLPs) are also available for identified and at-risk students. Other strategies include positive behavioral interventions and support (PBIS), response to intervention (RtI), English language learner (ELL) program, ParentConnect (the online portal for parents to view grades, attendance, and discipline referrals), mental health counseling, and the Wednesday morning tutoring program. Parents verify the use of these many intervention strategies. Several teachers also praise the speed with which the guidance department delivers information regarding updates to 504 plans. Information on how to best support identified students is shared with their teachers and support staff members, leading to full collaboration among these groups. As a result of this wide variety of timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies among teachers and support services staff members, students are wholly supported in their achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, teacher interview, students, student shadowing, teachers, school leadership team, school support staff)

The school provides an extensive array of information to families, especially those most in need, about available student support services. Numerous channels of communication exist to contact

and inform parents and students about support services offered at the school. The school and district websites, mailings, phone messenger all-calls, The South County Independent, Narragansett Times, ParentConnect, student assemblies, morning and afternoon school announcements, student advisory periods, and incoming freshman orientation as well as the Richer Picture digital portfolio system are used by the school to keep families informed. To provide further outreach to students and parents, the school offers a freshman mentoring program, a student club and activities forum at the middle school, the parent teacher group (PTG), parent portfolio night, athletic and music boosters, guidance advisories, Connecting All Resources for Educators and Students (SK CARES), the school improvement team (SIT), back to school night, a program of studies presentation at Curtis Corner Middle School, portfolio information nights, ParentConnect parent instruction, and freshman orientation night. These programs as well as efforts by the truancy officer and student assistance counselor attempt to connect students and parents with resources provided at the school. The school resource officer (SRO) provides counseling to students and serves as a guest speaker in health, criminal law, and the SK series classes in addition to serving in his main role as a police officer. The SRO also serves as an important link for students between the school and community and, as a result, is able to foster many positive relationships with students from a variety of backgrounds outside of school. According to the SRO, these positive student relations often extend beyond the individual student and frequently carry over to the student's family and other youths in their peer group. The Endicott Survey indicated that 73% of parents and 70% of students agree that the school provides information to families, especially those most in need, regarding available student support services. As a result of the variety of communication forms used at SKHS, families, especially those most in need, are kept well-informed about available student support services. (self-study, students, parents, school leadership team, school support staff, teachers, Endicott Survey)

Support services staff members use a wide variety of technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student. In order to deliver 21<sup>st</sup> century instruction and correspondence, teachers and staff members utilize PowerTeacher to report grades and communicate student academic progress with parents. The Richer Picture digital portfolio system enables teachers to monitor, assess, and provide individual students with feedback regarding their progress toward meeting the school's portfolio requirements. Additionally, parents track their child's progress on the Richer Picture portfolio system and correspond with teachers via e-mail regarding student performance and assignments. Staff members also utilize the Chancery SMS database system from school and home to report grades, attendance, and discipline information for all students. The school's website allows parents to view information about upcoming academic, athletic, and informational events taking place at the high school. The special education staff uses Technology for Improving Education (TIENET) programs for writing, reviewing, and progress monitoring of IEPs. School counselors use a range of software programs, in addition to Chancery SMS, which include Richer Picture, the Common Application website, and WayToGoRI.com, which focuses on career information. Students have access to seven computers in the guidance office dedicated to college and career research as well as two scanners for student use. Thus, support services staff use technology to provide an effective range of coordinated services for each student. (self-study, teacher interview, students, school support staff, parents, school leadership team)

South Kingstown High School counseling services have an adequate number of certified and 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; and use ongoing relevant assessment data to improve services and ensure that each student achieves the school's

21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The guidance department written curriculum, which is aligned with the National Standards for School Counseling Program, is implemented during guidance department visits to advisory classes and through the SK100 series courses and also through individual student meetings. Examples of curriculum resources and activities include a presentation on completing the PSATs, information on organizing and completing ILPs, and readings on college and career planning and financial literacy. Additionally, in a group assembly, every senior in the school is provided a binder that contains information on transcripts, important deadlines, and college and career planning. Seniors are required to keep and maintain their binder all year and must present the binder to their counselor during individual meetings. Personal, academic, career and college counseling are accessible and communicated to students through a variety of means. There is a system for ongoing communication with students, parents/guardians, and school personnel that is designed to keep them informed of available student support services. Channels for communication include the guidance advisory council, parent/teacher/student meetings, mailings, quarterly newsletters, and senior bulletins posted on the school's website. The guidance suite is well provisioned with a variety of print materials pertaining to college and career planning. A yearly-updated program of studies is accessible on the school website and each student receives a printed copy. The guidance office has bi-weekly evening hours and is staffed by two school counselors to provide student access. Career fairs are held for juniors each year. Additionally, all 9th grade students meet with their counselor individually bi-weekly. Counselors review personal and career interest surveys during these meetings to help freshmen focus on academic, personal, and career goals. The school has a healthy and collaborative relationship with several group homes in the community, and the school social worker has a healthy relationship with many families of students in need of support services and has been instrumental in getting families involved with mental health agencies and social service providers. Data and information on incoming students is collected through the Counselor Watch Referral, which asks middle school counselors to provide information on

students who may have experienced truancy or academic problems during grade eight. The referral also asks grade eight counselors to complete a rating scale on indicators such as medical issues, peer relationship problems, and discipline problems. The data is used to help identify at-risk students for the Rti process. Other data regularly used by the guidance department to ensure student achievement of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills include Individual Learning Plan (ILP) data through WayToGoRI and attendance data. Those data sources are used to track college or career planning and to alert the truant officer to excessive absenteeism. Finally, data from the NECAP and NWEA assessments are used to identify and place students in the ramp-up Numeracy and Literacy Enhancement, Navigator Math, and Writing for Success courses. Overall, 79.2% of staff members and 65.7% of parents agree that the number of support personnel is adequate. Therefore, South Kingstown High School is able to provide a written, develop mental program, regularly provide personal, academic, college, and career planning counseling, provide outreach to community and area mental health and social service agencies, and use relevant data to ensure that students achieve 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (parents, school leadership team, Endicott Survey, teachers, self-study)

South Kingstown High School's health services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff members that provide preventative health services and direct intervention services; use an appropriate referral process; conduct ongoing student health assessments; and use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The school's health staff provides appropriate preventative health services to the school community including vision screenings, state-mandated immunizations, food allergy monitoring, hygiene, nutrition, and overall health assessments. The school's nursing suite is extremely well-organized and includes multiple rooms to conduct private screenings. Some preventative health initiatives are also introduced by the school's resource officer, who

provides students with drug and alcohol abuse prevention training as well as identifying the dangers of domestic violence. Direct intervention services include emergency treatments for wound care, administering medication, assessments of substance abuse, and assessments of psycho-social well-being to determine if further intervention is needed. The Counselor Watch Referral allows the school to identify students quickly who may present medical issues or the need for mental health services. Additionally, the health staff completes a consultation form to communicate pertinent information to the school psychologist or social worker when students present previously undocumented social/emotional issues. Ongoing student health assessments include vision screenings (completed for all students during grade nine as required by Rhode Island law) and mental health/behavioral assessments as needed. The school nurse teacher diligently maintains data pertaining to immunizations, physical examinations, and other confidential medical concerns. These data are used to determine eligibility of students to participate in athletics and to monitor students who are at risk for various medical issues. Overall, 67.6% of students reports that they either agree or strongly agree that they are comfortable going to the school nurse. Additionally, nearly 88% of school staff members reports that the number of health services personnel in the building is adequate. Therefore, South Kingstown High School is able to provide preventative health and direct intervention services, use appropriate referral processes, conduct ongoing health assessments, and use ongoing, relevant data. (teacher interview, teachers, self study, Endicott Survey, school leadership team)

The library and information services program is appropriately staffed, and materials are fully integrated into the school's curriculum and instructional program. SKHS has one full-time library/media specialist, one full-time audio/visual technical support staff person, and one full-time library clerical assistant. The library/media specialist meets Wednesday mornings with the English department during common planning time (CPT) to revise and develop curriculum and instruction. The audio/visual technical support staff person maintains and inventories the

audio/visual equipment and assists teachers with technical support. The library media center is a welcoming space that contains a wide variety of print and non-print material, including E-books, access to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) (plagiarism detection website), and an array of online subscription databases. Many print materials and books are outdated. Although the average copyright of the print collection is 1988, the library/ media specialist has been unable to update the collection because of budget constraints. The library/media specialist also administers online surveys to students and teachers to gain feedback about the library program, facilities, and available materials. In addition, she elicits requests for materials from both teachers and students. According to the Endicott Survey, 63.8% of students and 70.8% of teachers believe the library provides a wide range of materials and technology and other information services. Thus, with the exception of some outdated print materials, the library/media center is appropriately staffed, and materials are fully integrated into the school's curriculum and instruction program. (Endicott Survey, teachers, students, parents, self-study)

The library/media center is filled to capacity on a daily basis. In 2009, the library was redesigned to better accommodate the students and staff. The library/media center offers regular and frequent access before, during, and after school. The library is open from 7:20 am – 3:00 pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays and from 7:20 am – 2:10 pm on Wednesdays and Fridays. The school uses library/media center space to administer Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) standardized testing. During a three to four week period in both the spring and the fall, the library/media center is closed to teachers and students while the testing occurs. As a result, classes are unable to access the library/media center for regular classroom instruction. Both teachers and students express dissatisfaction with the lack of access during these periods. As a result of technological difficulties in various classrooms in the building, many students rely on the computers available to them in the library media center. There are 38 computers for student-use and 3 computers for library staff. Students often use the computers for word

processing, research utilizing a variety of online subscription databases, and for compiling their portfolios. Students are encouraged to use the library media center technology but the frequent use of these computers by whole classes often impedes their access by individuals. Although library/media services are appropriately staffed and materials are fully integrated into the curriculum, access to the library is limited during testing and throughout the school day. Therefore, teacher and student access to the library/media center's collection and to technology is limited by the school's testing practices. (self-study, teachers, students, school support staff, student shadowing, Endicott Survey)

South Kingstown's 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 members who collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students. The staff performs ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Both regular education and special education teachers report that collaboration between the two groups of personnel is healthy and productive. Guidance staff members and regular education teachers collaborate with special educators to allow for smooth mainstreaming of students at the high school. Regular education staff members also commend guidance staff for their quick communication of information regarding updates to students' 504 plans. Inclusive learning opportunities are available to students through elective courses, particularly in the art and PE departments, as well as to incoming 9th grade students who have been heterogeneously grouped in science, math, and social studies courses; these heterogeneous opportunities will increase as the program expands over the next three years. Data from the Counselor Watch Referral, NWEA, NECAP, portfolio process, common course assessments (CCAs), and individual

learning plans (ILPs) are regularly used to improve and coordinate support services for students. These data are used to recommend students for services or for placement in the Literacy Enhancement, Numeracy Enhancement, Navigator Math, or Writing for Success courses. The school is also in the process of developing and refining its RtI process. Last year, the school's RtI process involved tracking a group of 25 freshmen who were identified through the counselor-watch referral. The program experienced mixed results. While some counselors were generally able to meet with their students regularly, timely data collection from teachers and the availability of teachers to participate in RtI meetings was insufficient. Currently, the school has applied for an RtI waiver from the state. As a result of the widespread collaboration and data analysis among teachers, counselors, and support staff members, inclusive opportunities ensure that each student is supported in his/her achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, teacher interview, teachers, Endicott Survey)

### **Commendations**

1. The wide variety of timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students that support each student's achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
2. The wide variety of communication methods used to keep SKHS families informed about support services at the school
3. The widespread use of technology by support services to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student
4. The availability of guidance personnel for regular meetings to provide students with personal, academic, career, and college counseling
5. The engagement of all students in group meetings by guidance personnel, particularly seniors, who receive ample information on important deadlines and college and career planning

6. The organization of the school's nursing suite, including the school nurse and her secretary, and the availability of multiple rooms for private and confidential consultation
7. The comprehensive 9th grade transition program
8. The collaboration between support service personnel and other members of the school community

### **Recommendations**

1. Provide adequate financial support of the library budget to continually update and enhance the print collection
2. Provide adequate financial support of the library budget to appropriately maintain and replace technology available to students
3. Increase availability of the library and its technology to individual students not participating in whole class instruction, and during test taking
4. Implement the school's response to intervention (RtI) process to address student needs



## Community Resources for Learning

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

1. The community and the district's governing body provide dependable funding for:
  - a wide range of school programs and services
  - sufficient professional and support staff
  - ongoing professional development and curriculum revision
  - a full range of technology support
  - sufficient equipment
  - sufficient instructional materials and supplies.
2. The school develops, plans, and funds programs:
  - to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant
  - to properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment
  - to keep the school clean on a daily basis.
3. The community funds and the school implements a long-range plan that addresses:
  - programs and services
  - enrollment changes and staffing needs
  - facility needs
  - technology
  - capital improvements.
4. Faculty and building administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget.

5. The school site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services.
6. The school maintains documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations.
7. All professional staff actively engage parents and families as partners in each student's education and reach out specifically to those families who have been less connected with the school.
8. The school develops productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning.

## **Conclusions**

The community and the district's governing body provide dependable funding for school programs and services, sufficient professional and support staff, on-going professional development and curriculum revision, technology support, equipment, and sufficient instructional materials and supplies; however, state funding has decreased steadily over the past three years and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. The school community is significantly challenged to provide adequate resources under the current financial environment. State funding for South Kingstown District has decreased from 22.3% of the entire budget in 2002 to 15.3% of the budget in 2011, and the South Kingstown School District has been informed that the state of Rhode Island will continue to cut funds over the next ten years starting in 2011-2012. Moreover, the high school operating budget has declined by 18.5% since FY09. Unfunded mandates also strain the school's ability to maintain its level of service under diminished funding environment. Several positions have been lost recently, including that of an assistant principal who also acted as curriculum coordinator. Professional development opportunities are a dedicated part of the school schedule in common planning time (CPT) and the teacher learning center (TLC). Curriculum planning and revision has traditionally been scheduled during the summer. This past summer, the summer curriculum planning time was eliminated for budgetary reasons. Teachers and administrators supplement budget constraints by employing alternatives (primarily grants) to fund the purchase of new computers and update software. Over 200 course offerings are listed in the course of studies for students to select which is significant. Department heads and teachers report that they are able to purchase sufficient instructional supplies and materials needed to support the curriculum. Although the district and school leadership, along with the faculty and staff, work together to maintain robust programming, regularly scheduled professional development and adequate support for instructional materials and supplies, the reduced budget diminishes opportunities to enhance

instruction and develop and revise curriculum. (self-study, school committee, parents, leadership team, teachers, classroom observations, Endicott Survey, SKHS Course of Studies)

The school has developed plans for the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant, to properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment and to keep the school clean on a daily basis; however, appropriate levels of funding are threatened by tight financial conditions. The school has a web-based work order system, SchoolDude, that all school personnel can access to report and request building repairs and maintenance. Work orders are reviewed and are prioritized by the maintenance director and then assigned to appropriate workers, and the date and amount of time taken to complete the task are logged. For technology repairs, protocols for computer and other technological equipment maintenance are in place. The annual operating budget is currently covering “restorative work” only. There is no additional funding for preventative maintenance. To keep the buildings in the district maintained, there are seven full-time maintenance workers: a licensed electrician, plumber, HVAC employee, a pipe fitter, and higher skilled laborers and general laborers. When necessary, outside contractors are hired to maintain and/or inspect various systems and equipment such as, but not limited to, fire alarms, heating/cooling systems, or security systems. The budget to keep the high school maintained and cleaned has decreased over the past three years by approximately 3%. To compensate for these budget cuts, the frequency of building maintenance has been affected. For example, the floors may be spot mopped rather than receiving a daily mopping. A maintenance binder is maintained by the head custodian at the high school and is followed for the up-keep of all areas of the school, such as hallways, classrooms, lobbies, and bathrooms. The head custodian keeps closely monitored records to determine purchases of supplies. A daily, weekly, and monthly cleaning schedule is in place for classrooms, office areas, restroom/locker rooms, common areas, multipurpose areas, gymnasium, lounge, and library. Despite difficulties with funding, the school follows an effective plan to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school

plant to properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment and to keep the school clean on a daily basis. (Endicott Survey, self-study materials, facility tour, teacher interview, school leadership team)

The community is funding and school leadership is developing a long-range plan for 2011–2016 that addresses programs and services, facility needs, technology and capital improvements, enrollment changes, and staffing. The current district strategic plan addresses programs, staffing, and facility needs for the school years 2006-2010, and a plan for 2011-2016 is being written; therefore, the district and school are currently between long-range planning cycles. There is a long-range plan for school improvement, technology infrastructure, and capital investments, but there is no plan to adjust for enrollment changes. According to the New England School Development Council, enrollment at SKHS is projected to decrease by an additional 40 students by 2015. The new plan diverges from the 2006-2010 plan, including a decrease of three teachers within the past year, decreased resources for technology capital purchases, and little or no significant capital improvements. The current school improvement plan includes language to address the academic and behavioral needs of students, and the technology plan lists current technologies and needs for the future. Based on a review of the school's formal long-range plans and the amounts budgeted for each of the programs over the last three years, there has been a decrease in funding by 18.5% for services and programs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements. The budget for capital improvements was \$55,000 for the district in 2007 and the amount was reduced to only \$10,000 for the district in 2010. Administrators and teachers report that a number of goals contained in the last long-range plan have not been met because of diminished resources. Planning for changes in state-mandated graduation requirements has been addressed by both district and school strategic plans. Thus, budget constraints affect the school community's ability to implement the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations imbedded in

the goals of the long-range plans. (self-study, teachers, teacher interviews, parents, department heads, leadership team, school board, central office personnel)

Faculty and building administrators actively collaborate in the development and implementation of the budget. Administrative input into development of the budget is clear and consistent, but faculty input varies by department. Some departments conduct formal meetings while others ask teachers for needs individually and informally. The budget for South Kingstown High School is given to the principal by central administration. The operating budget covers all expenses related to the high school, including supplies, textbooks, and equipment. Department heads create their budgets based on input from their department members. However, according to the Endicott Survey, only 51% of the teachers feels they have adequate input into the development of the department budget although teachers report that high priority requests for spending are usually approved. Some teachers and department heads report that it is sometimes difficult to purchase replacement textbooks and some supplies as their requests have been turned down. Department heads report that they have easy access to updated budget account balances. Beginning in the 2010-2011 school year, budget allocations have been released quarterly, adding a degree of logistical complexity to the budgeting process for some departments, particularly when purchasing textbooks and large quantities of consumable supplies. It is more difficult to obtain volume discounts, and department heads report that the requirement to obtain bids for purchases of \$1,000.00 or more is cumbersome because it requires additional paperwork. While only 43% of the staff surveyed feels that dependable funding is provided for instructional materials and supplies, teachers report general satisfaction with the budgeting process. Thus many faculty members and all building administrators are actively involved to varying degrees in the development and implementation of the budget. (self-study, teachers, department heads, school leadership, Endicott Survey)

The school site and plant support the delivery of school programs and services. South Kingstown High School provides space for implementation of the educational program. Science labs, media/information center, number of classrooms, performing arts areas, and cafeteria are adequate to support and deliver 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum. There is sufficient space for school administration services. The guidance suite provides private offices for each counselor and a dedicated conference room for meetings. South Kingstown High School's 1.5 psychologists, one social worker, and one student assistant counselor also have private offices for confidential meetings with parents and students. The nurse's office is deemed adequate for the services provided and has two rooms for confidential, emergency services. Special education teachers for severe and profound by handicapped students make the most of their limited classroom space, which provides physical therapy, life skills applications, and service for the Rebel Café. The school grounds provide adequate space for outdoor physical education classes and athletic activities; safe and secure parking for teachers, parents, students, and guests; for fire drills; and for the general entrance, egress, and outdoor recreation of students. Physical education has access to multipurpose fields adjacent to the school as well as town facilities of tennis courts and fields nearby and nature paths that are a five-minute walk away. Interscholastic sports have access to fields and a stadium for athletic events although students must be bussed to the fields. There are over 15 doors for egress and entrance for fire drills, but some lack the security of locked doors (i.e., near the carpentry and electronics classrooms, which are held in a building adjacent to the high school). The school has modified classrooms to house specific classes and programs, including agriculture, art, robotics, and other specialized class offerings. Despite the challenge of working in an older facility, the school site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services. (self-study, school leadership, teacher interview, facility tour, teachers)

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. A tour of the school maintenance building reveals a well-organized filing system that contains records of all OSHA, fire safety, and boiler inspections as well as ADA and HAZMAT documentation and procedures. The entire facility is handicapped accessible and complies with the Americans Disabilities Act. The building is cleaned daily, and there is ongoing maintenance by the custodial staff and the maintenance personnel. Consistent annual inspections of the facility, the elevator, and other major pieces of equipment are done. As a result, the facility meets applicable federal and state laws and is in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. (self-study, facilities tour, teachers, school leadership team)

Most professional staff members actively engage parents and families as partners in each student's education and continue to search for new methods of reaching out to those families who have been less connected to the school. South Kingstown High School utilizes numerous methods to engage families in the community, including School Messenger, an automated phone messaging service, home mailings, electronic list-serve messages, e-mails, and voice mail. Students and their families receive report cards every eight to nine weeks and progress reports at each quarterly halfway point. ParentConnect is a web-based portal for parents to view grading and additional pertinent information about their children at school. A weekly bulletin which lists activities and events at the school is published both electronically and in hard copy as are the senior and daily bulletins. Parents are invited to many evening informational programs. The guidance office is open to students and their families until 6:15 pm Wednesdays twice each month to increase access to guidance services. There are many co-curricular events that provide parents and families with opportunities to witness their students' educational growth. Athletic events continue to be well attended by parents and families, with 47% of students participating on one or more school teams. Sports booster organizations are strong, and SKPADES, an annual

junior variety show, is a major community event. Some families report that they need more proactive support for their academic at-risk students, and this process is currently evolving towards full implementation at South Kingstown High School. The Endicott Survey shows that 68% of the faculty either strongly agrees or agrees that the professional staff actively engages parents and families as partners; 57% of the parents strongly agrees or agrees that the professional staff engages families as partners in education. Therefore the professional staff is enthusiastic and sincere about engaging families about their children at school, providing many lines of communication, and offering several academic and behavioral interventions. (self-study, teachers, school leadership, parents, Endicott Survey).

There are many opportunities for productive parent and community relationships, and the school has begun to develop opportunities for business and higher education partnerships that support learning for all students. A few students in the severe/profound and mild/moderate special education programs are enrolled in the independent transition academy (ITA) which partners with local business and higher education institutes that offer students real-world opportunities. Parents regularly serve on committees that support the school's educational program and services, such as the parent/teacher group (PTG), special education local advisory committee (SELAC), South Kingstown connecting all resources for educational support (SK CARES), guidance advisory board, school improvement team (SIT), athletic booster club, music booster club, and the principal's coffee hour. A few significant business and higher education partnerships have been established to encourage student participation in real-world activities that link classroom knowledge with authentic applications of knowledge. Connections to institutions of higher learning for purposes of professional development for teachers have not been made. As a result of the many parent and community relationships, SKHS fosters an inclusive, supportive environment for students to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations; however, the current rotating schedule for the school day impedes the school's

ability to extend learning outside of the school building consistently for all students. (self-study, school leadership, parents, students, teachers, school leadership)

### **Commendations**

1. The provision by the community and the governing body of dependable funding for a wide range of school programs and services
2. The high level of dedication and innovation of the maintenance and custodial staff that have allowed the school to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant to properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment and to keep the school clean on a daily basis
3. The collaboration among the administrators and faculty and staff members that has created operating budgets to implement the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations in the face of diminished financial support from the state
4. The provision of long-range plans to address programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing levels, and technology
5. The school site and plant that support the delivery of high-quality programs and services
6. The significant, ongoing effort to reach out and engage families with valuable information that helps them understand the educational, intellectual, social, and psychological development of their children

### **Recommendations**

1. Develop and implement a plan to provide sufficient resources to achieve the schools 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations in the face of current fiscal constraints
2. Create and implement a 2011-2016 long-range plan to implement the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
3. Make faculty involvement in the budget process more consistent

4. Provide all students authentic learning opportunities with local businesses
5. Develop and implement a program to offer professional development opportunities for faculty members with institutions of higher learning
6. Review and amend the school's schedule to provide opportunities for school-to-work experiences for students

## FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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

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

To ensure that it has current information about the school, the Commission has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Commission within sixty days (60) of occurrence any substantive change which negatively impacts the school's adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The report of substantive change must describe the change itself and detail any impact which the change has had on the school's ability to meet the Standards for Accreditation. The Commission's Substantive Change Policy is included in the Appendix on page 92. 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 members of the visiting committee wish to express their appreciation for the hospitality extended to them during the accreditation visit by all stakeholders in the South Kingstown High School community.

**South Kingstown High School  
NEASC Accreditation Visit  
September 25 – 28, 2011**

**Visiting Committee**

Joseph Damplo, Chair New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. Bedford, MA 01730	Donna Maynard Montville Public Schools Oakdale, CT 06370
Lisa Pasonelli, Assistant Chair North Providence High School North Providence, RI 02904	Karen McCarthy Brighton High School Brighton, MA 02135
Patricia Armstrong Bridgewater Raynham Regional High School Bridgewater, MA 02324	Joyce Polucha Cumberland High School Cumberland, RI 02864
Scott Brigante Mansfield High School Mansfield, MA 02048	Aliza Schneller North Quincy High School Quincy, MA 02171
Joshua Goodwin Burrillville High School Harrisville, RI 02830	Gail Van Buren Dighton-Rehoboth Regional High School North Dighton, MA 02764
Lawrence Izzi Burrillville High School Harrisville, RI 02830	Maura Walsh Lynn English High School Lynn, MA 01902
Patricia King Windham High School Willimantic, CT 06226	Anna Wood Mount Hope High School Bristol, RI 02809
Richard Kinslow Central Falls High School Central Falls, RI 02863	David Zoglio Classical High School Providence, RI 02903

# NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

## Commission on Public Secondary Schools

### SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

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

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