

TOLLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Hicks Municipal Center  
Council Chambers  
Tolland, CT 06084

REGULAR MEETING

7:30 – 10:00 P.M.

AGENDA  
September 10, 2014

**VISION STATEMENT**

*To represent education at its best, preparing each student for an ever-changing society, and becoming a full community of learning where excellence is achieved through each individual's success.*

A. CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Regular Meeting – August 27, 2014

C. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (2 minute limit)

*The members of the Tolland Board of Education welcome members of the public to share their thoughts and ideas at this time. When appropriate to do so, members of the Board and the administration may respond to comments during "Points of Information". However, in consideration of those in attendance and in an effort to proceed in a timely manner, follow-up discussion may need to take place outside of the meeting setting.*

D. POINTS OF INFORMATION

E. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

F. TEACHER OF THE YEAR RECOGNITION – Anthea Grotton

G. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

H. COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS

I. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

J. BOARD ACTION

J.1 Authorized Signatures Change Form

K. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (2 minute limit)

*Comments must be limited to items on this agenda.*

L. POINTS OF INFORMATION

M. CORRESPONDENCE

- Town Council Meeting - August 26, 2014
- NEASC Final Report
- Operating Budget Memo

N. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

O. ADJOURNMENT

TOLLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Hicks Municipal Center  
Council Chambers  
Tolland, CT 06084

REGULAR MEETING – August 27, 2014

Members Present: Mr. Sam Adlerstein, Chair; Mr. Patrick Doyle, Vice Chair; Ms. Kathy Gorsky, Secretary; Ms. Karen Moran, Mr. Steve Clark, Mr. Robert Pagoni, Ms. Colleen Yudichak, and Mr. Joe Sce.

Administrators Present: Dr. Thomas McDowell, Interim Superintendent of Schools; Ms. Jane Neel, Business Manager; Dr. Kathryn Eidson, Director of Curriculum and Instruction

A. CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 P.M. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – August 13, 2014 – Regular Meeting

Mr. Clark motioned to accept the minutes of the August 13, 2014 meeting. Mr. Doyle seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

C. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (2 minute limit) - none

D. POINTS OF INFORMATION

Mr. Clark commented on the packet sent to the members. He asked if it is necessary to include all of the attachments, specifically the slides and expressed concern regarding the paper, ink, and postage required for their inclusion. Mr. Adlerstein responded that one option may be to send the packets electronically. Mr. Pagoni commented that he liked receiving the packets. He can read the information when/where he wants to and would not be willing to pay out of pocket to print it at home. Ms. Gorsky suggested that perhaps some items, such as the policies, could be online. Mr. Adlerstein will ask the Superintendent's secretary to survey the Board members and make a recommendation to the Board. Mr. Frattaroli commented that this has been tried before and was not successful.

In regard to correspondence, Ms. Gorsky noted that three items were received. One was from RAGE Robotics inquiring if it would be possible to have a shipping container for storage of equipment not currently being used. Another message was received that requested that there be an additional (tenth) kindergarten teacher. Lastly, Ms. Gorsky received correspondence that in the next 2 years, UCONN will hire up to 500 faculty and staff which may impact enrollment in Tolland's schools.

Mr. Adlerstein noted that the Finance and Facilities Committee is awaiting additional information from DRA. Specifically, they are waiting for a detailed spreadsheet that DRA presented.

E. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT - none

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. McDowell noted that he is awaiting the final report of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges accreditation visit to Tolland High School. Once received, he will provide the Board with a copy and explained the procedure.

In regard to the open assistant principal position at Tolland High School, the posting will close on Friday. Interim assistant principal Peter Micari will serve until the appointment is made.

Dr. McDowell spoke with both Principal Fox and Mr. Langlois regarding RAGE Robotics' request for the shipping container. After discussing the options, Dr. McDowell denied the request. Ms. Fox said that other arrangements could be made. Dr. McDowell will update the Board with additional information when available.

At the end of the last Board meeting, Ms. Neel volunteered to meet with First Student to discuss having them pay for some of the electric costs. Ms. Neel successfully negotiated for First Student to pay \$300 per month for the 2014/15 school year.

Dr. McDowell updated the Board on the issues of the kindergarten class sizes. There were over 170 registered students. In turn, he hired an additional kindergarten teacher. This expense will come from the operating budget in lieu of the speech and language pathologist position which was advertised but not filled. In total, there are 174 kindergarten students in 10 classrooms for an average of 17.4 students per teacher.

Today's school opening was discussed. Dr. McDowell was very concerned about the conditions he found at TIS and TMS in the first week of August. A lot of work has gone into getting the schools where they are. There were over 100 volunteers at TMS on Saturday. It was a great community effort and he appreciates what everyone has done to help get the schools ready. Most importantly, today's first day was extremely successful. The busses ran a little late but this is to be expected at the beginning of the school year. He will update the Board at the next meeting.

A good opening does not just happen, he said. Dr. McDowell thanked the teachers, custodians, secretaries, maintenance, central office administrators and staff, and the building administrators for their dedicated efforts over the summer. He also thanked Clem Langlois, Dennis Carr and John Carroll. In particular, he commended Jim Dineen and Walt Willett for what they accomplished over the summer. In all of schools today, Dr. McDowell saw students' bright and shining faces and teachers ensuring things were orderly. He attended Freshman Orientation at THS and commented that it went well and was a classy operation. In summary, he owes a lot of people many thanks.

F.1. Tuition Rates – Fiscal Year 2014-15

By Policy #3070, the district administration must set tuition rates for each fiscal year in accordance with per pupil cost. (Attachment F.1) No action is required.

The discussion was opened to the Board.

Mr. Clark inquired about those families who requested a half-day kindergarten program. Dr. McDowell confirmed that all students are attending full-day kindergarten.

Mr. Doyle thanked Dr. McDowell for being in the schools over the weekend. As a Board member, Mr. Doyle appreciates his commitment. Mr. Adlerstein added that Dr. McDowell was in Tolland at 7am this morning and visited more than ½ of the classrooms in the District. He appreciated Dr. McDowell's visibility. Mr. Pagoni inquired how much advance notice would be needed if a Board member wished to observe a class. Dr. McDowell replied a couple days' notice would be fine.

Dr. McDowell noted that this Thursday, after 13 years of service, Ms. Neel will leave the District to take another position. He commended Ms. Neel for all of her efforts and the Board provided a memento of thanks. Mr. Adlerstein thanked Ms. Neel for her dedication. Ms. Neel thanked the Board and noted that the ED01 was completed this weekend.

G. SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH UPDATES – Dr. Gagliarducci

Dr. Gagliarducci noted that he has had some successful meetings with the Search Committee. Initially there were 14 applications and 5 are slated for interview. The Committee has drafted a series of questions and after the interviews it will be up the Board. He requested 2 dates to meet with the Board and reviewed the process. He is available on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 16<sup>th</sup> and is leaving it up to the Chair to determine the dates, times, and locations.

H. COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS

Finance and Facilities

Mr. Doyle noted that they are awaiting the DRA report.

Policy – Ms. Gorsky noted that there is no new information.

Communications – Ms. Moran noted that there is no new information

Website Taskforce

Ms. Moran noted that they are working on finalizing recommendations for the Board.

Town Council

Ms. Moran commented that she learned that the Town Manager was meeting today with the Commissioner of Public Safety in regard to the school security grant.

Town Council Member Paul Krasusky, liaison to the Board, commented that he understands from the minutes of the last Board meeting that the Board wishes to review some of the terms and the nature of the Honeywell contract. The Town Manager is going to look at some options for dates. Mr. Adlerstein noted that they also wished to look at the utility agreement.

Technology Taskforce

Mr. Adlerstein noted that they would meet tomorrow night and will focus on working toward a technology plan that will be useful for now and the future.

I. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Mr. Adlerstein explained that the focus is on how the Interim Superintendent sees his role and the Board's role in this time of transition.

The Interim Superintendents role includes:

1. District assessment
2. Preparing for the success of the permanent superintendent
3. Preparing for the upcoming budget cycle

In regard to the Board's side, Mr. Adlerstein asked Dr. McDowell to comment on how the Board operates and what he sees as opportunities for improvement.

Dr. McDowell explained that he has only been at one Board meeting and a few committee meetings. The Board needs to look at how it streamlines meetings and committee reports need to be succinct. It is acceptable for a committee not to meet and not have a report. He advised the Board to look at the process of the minutes – they do not go along with Board policies. At the last Board meeting, he witnessed some interactions that should have been confined to the Board.

He added that he is trying to present view of what should be and not a negative comment on how things are done. The Board and the Superintendent need to establish not only a communication loop but also tie up some loose ends and establish trust through communication. Since he has been here, Dr. McDowell has provided updates to the Board every Friday and will continue to do so. It will be a process to streamline things. Now that school has started, he will have a better assessment. The Board has asked him for a frank assessment of how things are going in the schools and how the Board is operating as well as to prepare for the next superintendent. He would like the opportunity to respond to these questions in the future after he has been in the district longer. Mr. Adlerstein agreed that that conversation should be continued and taken positively and constructively.

Dr. McDowell explained that if something is on the agenda, there is no policy that requires that something not be acted upon. If additional information is not needed, waiting to act just lengthens the board meetings. From his experience, a board meeting should not last 2 hours. The information is available before the meeting. His job is to get the answers the Board needs before it gets to the meeting so a discussion can take place. Mr. Frattaroli commented that providing good information is everyone's intent. Ms. Gorsky added that the process of getting more information via the weekly updates can make a difference in the length of the meetings.

Mr. Pagoni, in regard to the interaction with the public, the Board does talk to the public. It is a process that started about 6 years ago and they are now at the peak of where people can say what they want to say and get a response or have someone get back to them. In turn, he would prefer not to cut down on the interaction with the public. The Board has had more public turnout than ever before.

Dr. McDowell noted that the agenda has two places on the agenda for public participation. Board meetings are not public meetings. They are meetings held in the public. More than three Board of Education members have asked him to streamline the meetings so they do not last as long and he agrees with them. Mr. Pagoni provided the historical background of the two public participation items on the agenda. Dr. McDowell explained that two items of public participation

and interaction with the public are not needed at the same time. He writes notes about what the public says and responds to the person. That is the job of the superintendent. Ms. Gorsky confirmed that changes to the agenda would fall under the Policy Committee. Dr. McDowell does not recommend that the Board eliminate any of its public participation. He is referring to the interaction during the board meeting in addition to the public participation.

Mr. Adlerstein explained that the challenge is that it is a public meeting and not a meeting with the public but the Board wants the public to feel invited. The essence of the meeting should be kept yet the meeting should be tightened up. Mr. Pagoni felt strongly that if a question is asked, and the answer is known, that a response should be provided at the meeting. Mr. Frattaroli believes that doing otherwise leaves protracted communication and speculation yet did not believe that 2 weeks was too long to wait for a response.

Dr. McDowell commented that at the last meeting, he did not hear a lot of questions that were asked or answered. He heard dialog. At one point, the Board was watching 2 people in the audience have a conversation and that is not how it is supposed to work. Mr. Adlerstein responded that this is not what the Board wants to hold up as how the Board works. Mr. Sce commented that this was very common during the budget process – there was an incredible amount of dialog going back and forth with the public. Mr. Pagoni responded that the other choice is to go back to how it used to be done. Mr. Sce said there were many choices. Mr. Adlerstein commented that it is something that needs to be tightened up while allowing the public to have input and doing it in a more structured way. Ms. Gorsky added that it is the Board's job to listen but not to create a situation for dialog that goes on and on. Some items need to be thought about before a response can be provided.

Mr. Doyle commented that when something comes back from the Policy Committee regarding streamlining and updating that the Board needs to give it value. There are several ways to do it and he trusts the Policy Committee to work on it and bring it back to the Board. Further, he noted that during the budget process there are two separate occasions – the regular board meeting and the budget workshops. The latter is different. If the board meetings are adjusted, it does not mean that the workshops are being altered. Other mechanisms are available for deeper engagement with the public. Mr. Clark noted that the workshops have more interaction but the problem was the when the budget cycle ended, the workshop concept continued. If a question comes up in public participation, it can be addressed under points of information if the information is available. Mr. Pagoni added that there does not have to be an extreme but the Chair needs to keep it under control.

Dr. McDowell noted that the Board has asked Dr. Gagliarducci for his feedback on the meetings as well. This will be shared with the Policy Committee.

J. BOARD ACTION

- J.1 Board Policy #5120 Administration of Student Medications in the Schools
- Board Policy #5050 Confidentiality and Access to Student Records
- Board Policy and Administrative Regulation #3080 Advertising Signage

Dr. McDowell noted these were presented for a first reading and discussed at the last meeting. He briefly reviewed the changes. See attachments.

Ms. Gorky motioned to approve Board Policy #5050 Confidentiality and Access to Student Records, Board Policy 5120 Administration of Student Medications in the Schools, and Board Policy and Administrative Regulation #3080 Advertising Signage. Mr. Clark seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

K. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - none

L. POINTS OF INFORMATION

Mr. Clark thanked Ms. Neel for all of her years in Tolland. It shows the dedication she has to the District. The District appreciates her services and wishes her well.

Dr. McDowell thanked Ms. Moran and Ms. Gorsky for being at the convocation ceremony. There was an excellent opening, Teacher of the Year recognition, and Paraprofessional of the Year recognition.

M. CORRESPONDENCE

- Town Council Meeting - August 12, 2014
- Joint Meeting – Town Council/Tolland Water Commission
- 2014-2015 School Calendar
- 2014-2015 Open House/Curriculum Night Calendars
- CAFE Correspondence
- Opening Day Schedule

N. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Dr. McDowell will reach out to the Teacher of the Year and the Paraprofessional of the Year to invite them to the next Board meeting.

O. ADJOURNMENT

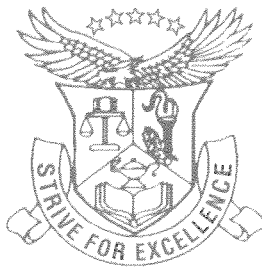
Mr. Clark motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:42 PM. Mr. Doyle seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa Pascuzzi  
Clerk





**TOLLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

51 TOLLAND GREEN  
TOLLAND, CONNECTICUT 06084

OFFICE OF THE  
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS  
860-870-6850  
FAX: 860-870-7737

**Dr. Thomas Y. McDowell**  
*Interim Superintendent*

J.1

September 5, 2014

TO: Tolland Board of Education

FR: Dr. T. Y. McDowell

RE: Consideration of the Approval of the Change in Names on the Tolland Public Schools Child Nutrition Program Account

It is recommended that the Board approve of the change in names on the Tolland Public Schools Child Nutrition Program Account, and Ron Army, Interim Business Manager, effective September 2, 2014.

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and  
Adult Education  
25 Industrial Park Road  
Middletown, Connecticut 06457-1543

FOR STATE USE ONLY

Effective Date: \_\_\_\_\_

AGREEMENT NUMBERS:

School Programs \_\_\_\_\_

Child Day Care Centers \_\_\_\_\_

Adult Day Care Centers \_\_\_\_\_

Day Care Homes \_\_\_\_\_

Summer Food Service \_\_\_\_\_

**AUTHORIZED SIGNATURES CHANGE FORM**

Read the enclosed instructions before completing the form.

This is to certify that on 09/10/14 as shown in the minutes of  
(Date)

Tolland Board of Education

(Name of Corporation, Board of Education or Governing Body)

The following action was taken to revise the Authorized Signers of the **ED-099 Agreement for Child Nutrition Programs**.

1. *The person designated below is authorized to sign this agreement and to sign claims for reimbursement.*



Signature

Dr. Thomas Y. McDowell – Interim Superintendent

Printed Name

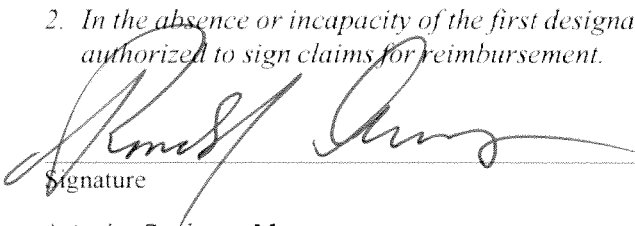
Interim Superintendent

9/10/14

Title (Superintendent of Schools, Mayor, Selectman, President  
or Chairperson of the Board, Pastor or Commissioner)

Date

2. *In the absence or incapacity of the first designated individual, the second person designated below is authorized to sign claims for reimbursement.*



Signature

Mr. Ronald Army – Interim Business Manager

Printed Name

Interim Business Manager

9/10/14

Title (Assistant Superintendent, Business Official, Principal,  
Headmaster, City or Town Manager, Executive Director  
or Deputy Commissioner)

Date

3. *The signature below certifies the above action.*

Signature

Title (Secretary of Corporation, Town Clerk, Secretary  
of the Board)

## MEETING MINUTES

### TOLLAND TOWN COUNCIL HICKS MEMORIAL MUNICIPAL CENTER 6<sup>th</sup> FLOOR COUNCIL ROOM AUGUST 26, 2014 – 7:30 P.M.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Jack Scavone, Chairman; George Baker, Vice-Chair; William Eccles; Richard Field and Paul Krasusky

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Jan Rubino and Ben Stanford

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Steven Werbner, Town Manager; Michael Wilkinson, Director of Administrative Services

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Jack Scavone called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Recited.
3. **MOMENT OF SILENCE:** Observed.
4. **PROCLAMATIONS:** None.
5. **PUBLIC PETITIONS, COMMUNICATIONS, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** (*on any subject within the jurisdiction of the Town Council*) (*2 minute limit*): None.
6. **PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS:**
  - 6.1 Consideration and action concerning a resolution authorizing the issue of \$11,000,000 bonds to refund certain prior bonds of the Town and to finance such additional amounts as are needed to pay all fees, costs, expenses and premium in connection with the refunding of the prior bonds and appropriating the proceeds of such bonds for the foregoing purpose.

George Baker moved to open the public hearing; Seconded by Rick Field. All in favor. None opposed.

No public comment. A straw poll was conducted of all those in favor of this resolution: 2 in favor. 1 abstained.

Paul Krasusky moved to close the public hearing; Seconded by George Baker. All in favor. None opposed.

George Baker motioned to accept the following resolution:

WHEREAS, Section 7-370c of the Connecticut General Statutes provides authority for any municipality to issue refunding bonds for the payment, funding or refunding of bonds, notes or other obligations previously issued; and

WHEREAS, Section 7-370c provides that such refunding bonds shall be authorized and issued by resolution of the legislative body of the municipality; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Tolland, Connecticut (the "Town") desires to refund all or any portion of any one or more series of the Town's outstanding general obligation bonds (the "Prior Bonds").

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,

- (1) That the Town issue its general obligation bonds in the aggregate principal amount of up to \$11,000,000 (the "Bonds") to refund certain of the Prior Bonds and to finance such additional amounts as are needed to pay all fees, costs, expenses and premium in connection with the refunding of the Prior Bonds and the authorization, issuance and sale of the Bonds, including, but not limited to, legal, advisory, printing and administrative expenses, underwriter's discount, net interest on borrowings and other financing costs, and expenses in connection with credit enhancement, if necessary, and the proceeds of the Bonds be appropriated for the foregoing purposes; provided, however, that the refunding of the Prior Bonds provides net present value savings to the Town and that the amount of the Bonds issued does not exceed the amount needed to refund the Prior Bonds and to pay the costs authorized herein.
- (2) That the Town Manager and the Treasurer of the Town (the "Officials") are hereby authorized to determine the date, amounts, rates of interest, maturities, dates of principal and interest payments on such Bonds, the form of such Bonds, the provisions for protecting and enforcing the rights and remedies of the holders of such Bonds and all other terms, conditions and particular matters regarding the Bonds and the issuance and securing thereof, all in accordance with the Connecticut General Statutes and the Charter of the Town, and to take such actions and execute such documents including, but not limited to, a contract of purchase and to provide all supporting documentation as may be necessary or desirable to accomplish such purposes and to comply with the requirements of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission Rule 15c2-12, and any other applicable provision of law thereto enabling. The Bonds authorized hereby shall be general obligations of the Town secured by the full faith and credit of the Town.
- (3) That the Bonds shall be signed by the Officials either by their genuine signatures or by facsimiles of such signatures printed on the Bonds and that the law firm of Updike, Kelly & Spellacy, P.C., Hartford, Connecticut, is designated as bond counsel to render an opinion approving the legality of the issuance of the Bonds.
- (4) That the Officials are hereby authorized to designate a bank or trust company to be the certifying bank, registrar, escrow agent, transfer agent and paying agent for such Bonds; to provide for the keeping of a record of the Bonds; to designate a financial advisor to the Town in connection with the sale of the Bonds; to designate an underwriter in connection with any negotiated sale and purchase of the Bonds.
- (5) That the Officials are hereby authorized to sell the Bonds at a public or negotiated sale; to deliver the Bonds and to perform all other acts which are necessary or appropriate to issue the Bonds; to make representations and covenants on behalf of the Town for the benefit of the holders of the Bonds to provide secondary market disclosure information in accordance with U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission Rule 15c2-12, as it may be amended from time to time, including, but not limited to, executing and delivering a continuing disclosure agreement; their respective approvals to be conclusively evidenced by their signature on any such agreements relating thereto.
- (6) That the Officials are hereby authorized to refund the Prior Bonds from the proceeds of the Bonds and other moneys as they may determine to make available for this purpose, and to defease

the Prior Bonds by executing and delivering an escrow agreement in such form and upon such terms as they shall approve, such approval to be conclusively evidenced by their execution thereof.

(7) That the Officials are hereby authorized on behalf of the Town to make such representations and covenants for the benefit of the holders of the Bonds which are necessary or appropriate to ensure the exemption of interest on the Bonds from taxation under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, including, but not limited to, covenants to pay rebates of investment earnings to the United States in future years; their respective approvals to be conclusively evidenced by their signature on any such agreements relating thereto.

(8) That the Officials are hereby authorized to designate other officials or employees of the Town to take such actions and execute such documents, as are determined to be necessary or advisable and in the best interests of the Town in order to refund the Prior Bonds and to issue, sell and deliver the Bonds, and that the execution and delivery of such documents shall be conclusive evidence of such determination.

Seconded by Bill Eccles. All in favor. None opposed.

7a. **REPORTS OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES RESPONSIBLE TO THE COUNCIL:** Karen Moran, the BOE Liaison, gave an update: All four schools are opening on time tomorrow. Considering all the work that was done during the summer, she said that is quite a feat. She thanked Mr. Langlois, the custodians, the Public Works and volunteers for their help. The schools look great. Last Monday, Dr. McDowell addressed all the staff, along with Chief Littell. Trooper Corradi was also introduced to everyone.

7b. **REPORTS OF TOWN COUNCIL LIAISONS:** Mr. Krasusky advised that he did not attend the BOE meeting, but updated the Council via use of the minutes: the Board approved the School Resource Officer Guidelines; they discussed their contribution for the Honeywell account and are revisiting those details. They have an interest in meeting with all of the relevant people to review the nature of the agreement and some of the mechanics; they will be improving the lighting at TMS; on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, there was a volunteer day at TMS. Ms. Moran said there were approximately 100 volunteers that showed up to help. The staff is very appreciative. Mr. Krasusky added that the superintendent search continues.

Mr. Baker summarized the PZC meeting: Gottier's subdivision got continued again, the PZC denied the zone change regarding the lot off the Green on Merrow Road, and there was a small modification for signs made.

Archie Tanner, Vice Chair of the Inlands/Wetlands Commission, said he met with two candidates for the Inlands / Wetland Commission. They need members, and there are two very qualified candidates, Todd Penney and Scott Tardiff.

**Rick Field motioned to move item 8.3 up on the agenda. Seconded by George Baker. All in favor. None opposed.**

**8.3** Appointments to vacancies on various municipal boards/commissions: No appointments tonight.

Rick Field moved to appoint **Todd Penney** as a **regular** member, and **Scott Tardiff** as an **alternate** member to the Inlands / Wetlands Commission. Seconded by Bill Eccles. All in favor. None opposed.

**8. NEW BUSINESS (ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS):**

- 8.1 Discuss and take action on a proposed revision of the Conservation Easement to Joshua's Tract Conservation and Historic Trust, Inc., Trust for Sage Meadow Open Space, to allow haying of the meadows.

Mr. Werbner said haying is currently prohibited, and advised that the Trust is in favor of this.

Dorothy Mickiewicz said without this revision, the property would need to be mowed, which would cost money.

George Baker motioned to accept the following resolution:

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Tolland Town Council that it approves the proposed amendment to the Conservation Easement to Joshua's Tract Conservation and Historic Trust, Inc., Trust for the Sage Meadow Open Space, to allow haying and authorizes Steven R. Werbner, Town Manager to execute said document.

Seconded by Paul Krasusky. All in favor. None opposed.

- 8.2 Discussion of the Tolland Water Commission Report.

Mr. Scavone made the suggestion that the Town Manager investigate and have conversations with the parties that might be interested in purchasing our water company to see what the options are. Also, he'd like for him to communicate with the Town Attorney on this issue. Once information is gathered, an intelligent decision can then be made. Mr. Field said they need a legal opinion as to who owns the system, who can sell it, and who should get the money. There are a bunch of legal questions that need to be answered. The Council members agreed with Mr. Scavone's suggestion.

Mr. Baker motioned to authorize Mr. Werbner to investigate and have conversations with the parties that might be interested in purchasing our water company. Also, he should communicate with the Town Attorney as to what the various options are. Seconded by Rick Field. All in favor. None opposed.

- 8.3 Appointments to vacancies on various municipal boards/commissions: See above.

9. **OLD BUSINESS (ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS):** None.

10. **REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER (A WRITTEN REPORT SHALL BE PROVIDED THE 1<sup>ST</sup> MEETING OF THE MONTH ONLY):** Mr. Werbner advised that he has a meeting tomorrow with the Commissioner of Public Safety to discuss the Memorandum of Understanding related to the School Resource Officer. A new town engineer has been appointed: Bill Dwinells. He will be starting on September 15, 2014. They are actively wrapping up summer projects. Honeywell is expected to be done by the end of October / November. A number of things are still happening, but they are moving along. The Library contract is under review with the Town Attorney.

11. **ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

- 11.1 August 11, 2014 Special Meeting Minutes – Town Council/Tolland Water Commission: Rick Field moved to adopt the minutes **with the following change noted:** *Page 6, second to the last paragraph should read 'With an operator in place, an engineer will **not** need to respond to everything.'* Seconded by Bill Eccles. All in favor. None opposed. Paul Krasusky and George Baker abstained.

- 11.2 August 12, 2014 Regular Meeting Minutes: George Baker moved to adopt the minutes; Seconded by Rick Field. All in favor. None opposed. Paul Krasusky abstained.

12. **CORRESPONDENCE TO COUNCIL:** None.

13. **COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS FROM COUNCILPERSONS:** Mr. Krasusky asked what the timeframe was to do Mr. Werbner's review. Mr. Werbner said sometime in October is sufficient.

14. **PUBLIC LISTED PARTICIPATION** *(on any subject within the jurisdiction of the Town Council) (3 minute limit):*

**Archie Tanner** – He asked who investigated the company for the solar project in Tolland. He believes their prices are highly inflated. Mr. Wilkinson said CEFIA, a state agency, did a RFP. They had 10-12 companies apply, and the company being used was chosen. Mr. Tanner said after looking on-line at solar panels, their quote was no bargain. Mr. Scavone said he wouldn't be entitled to the rebates if he didn't go through CEFIA. They also guarantee production. Mr. Scavone volunteered to discuss this further with Mr. Tanner after the meeting.

**Karen Moran** – She asked if the town was still investigating solar fields. Mr. Werbner said yes. There are some sites being looked at.

15. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

William Eccles motioned to go into Executive Session at 8:02 p.m., thus ending the Regular Meeting of the Town Council. Invited to the Executive Session were: John Littell, Doug Racicot, Mike Wilkinson and Karen Moran. Seconded by Paul Krasusky. All in favor. None opposed.

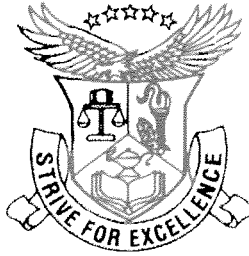
15.1 Discuss School Security Grant.

16. **ADJOURNMENT:** Rick Field moved to adjourn the meeting; Seconded by Paul Krasusky at 8:32 p.m. All were in favor.

Michelle A. Finnegan  
Town Council Clerk

---

Jack Scavone, Council Chair



**TOLLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

51 TOLLAND GREEN  
TOLLAND, CONNECTICUT 06084

OFFICE OF THE  
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS  
860-870-6850  
FAX: 860-870-7737

**Dr. Thomas Y. McDowell**  
*Interim Superintendent*  
September 2, 2014

TO: Building Administrators  
Central Office Administrators  
Other Responsible for Budget Development and Implementation

FR: Dr. T. Y. McDowell

RE: 2014-2015 Operating Budget

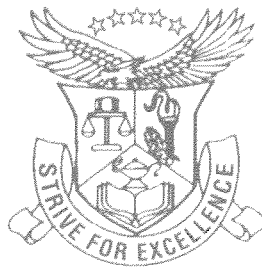
Effective immediately, and until further notice, I am freezing spending regarding the 2014-2015 operating budget.

Any expenditures will need to be approved by either Mr. Army, Interim Business Manager, or by me.

I appreciate your understanding and thank you in advance for your cooperation. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact me.

Cc: Mr. Ron Army, Business Manager  
Board of Education





**TOLLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

51 TOLLAND GREEN  
TOLLAND, CONNECTICUT 06084

OFFICE OF THE  
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS  
860-870-6850  
FAX: 860-870-7737

**Dr. Thomas Y. McDowell**  
*Interim Superintendent*

September 5, 2014

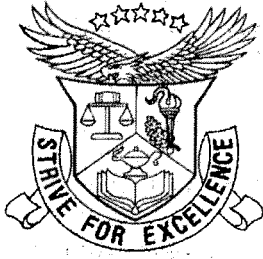
TO: Tolland Board of Education

FR: Dr. T. Y. McDowell

RE: NEASC Final Report

I have attached a copy of Principal Dominique Fox's letter regarding the receipt of the Final Report from the new England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) decennial accreditation visit of Tolland High School last spring. The Final Report is also attached.

Mrs. Fox will attend the September 23<sup>rd</sup> Board of Education meeting and will make a presentation regarding the NEASC report.



# TOLLAND HIGH SCHOOL

One Eagle Hill  
Tolland, Connecticut 06084  
860-870-6818  
FAX 860-870-6826

**Dominique M. Fox**  
*Principal*

**Margot P. Martello**  
*Assistant Principal*

September 3, 2014

Dear School Community Members,

I am pleased to inform you that we have been granted continued accreditation and present to you the Tolland High School 2014 New England Association of Schools and College (NEASC) Decennial Report. This report summarizes the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations of the 15-member evaluation committee that conducted a comprehensive examination of our school in March 2014.

Prior to the visit, members of our school community engaged in a two-year self-study process culminating in a report that addressed our adherence to the Committee on Public Secondary School's seven Standards for Accreditation. The self-study provided an opportunity for our professional staff to review all our educational programs, processes, systems, and practices to determine the degree to which our school meets those rigorous Standards. As part of the evaluation process, members of evaluation committee reviewed our self-study report, interviewed various stakeholder groups, shadowed students, and examined student work.

The final report from NEASC provides commendations that serve as an affirmation of what we do well and offers recommendations that will guide our school community in our continuous school improvement efforts. Although we are still waiting for the final letter from the Commission of Public Secondary Schools to learn whether we will be asked to complete a Special Progress Report, the accreditation process and final report serve as the foundation for the work we will complete in preparation for our next decennial evaluation.

Moving forward, Tolland High School will utilize a strategic and collaborative approach to address the recommendations highlighted in the final report by forming a Follow-Up Committee. NEASC also requires our school to submit a two-year and five-year report outlining our progress in those targeted areas.

As I have previously expressed, I am extremely proud of the efforts of the entire school community through the self-study process and school visit. It is comforting to know that the members of the visiting committee were able to validate many of the fine educational experiences that we have to offer at Tolland High School. Lastly, knowing that the positive outcome is reflective of all in the school district and the Tolland community, I would like to thank you for your continued support in our pursuit of educational excellence.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Dominique Fox  
Principal

cc: State Department of Education

**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

**COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

***REPORT OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE***

**Tolland High School**

**Tolland, Connecticut**

March 23 – 26, 2014

Donald W. Gates, Chair

Marilyn Tencza, Assistant Chair

Dominique Fox, Principal

New England Association of Schools & Colleges, Inc.  
3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100  
Burlington, MA 01803  
TOLL FREE: 1-855-886-3272 TEL. 781-425-7700 FAX 781-425-1001

## **STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS**

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

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

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

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<b>Statement On Limitations</b> .....	1
Introduction.....	3
School and Community Summary.....	5
<b>School's Statement of Mission and Expectations for Student Learning</b> .....	8
<b>Teaching and Learning Standards</b>	
Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations.....	9
Curriculum .....	14
Instruction .....	21
Assessment of and for Student Learning .....	31
<b>Support of Teaching and Learning Standards</b>	
School Culture and Leadership .....	41
School Resources for Learning .....	53
Community Resources for Learning .....	62
Follow-Up Responsibilities .....	69

## APPENDICES

- A. Roster of Visiting Committee Members
- B. Committee Policy on Substantive Change
- C. List of Commendations and Recommendations

## INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

- Teaching and Learning Standards
  - Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations
  - Curriculum
  - Instruction
  - Assessment of and for Student Learning
- Support of Teaching and Learning Standards
  - School Culture and Leadership
  - School Resources for Learning
  - Community Resources for Learning.

The accreditation program for public schools involves a threefold process: the self-study conducted by the local professional staff, the on-site evaluation conducted by the Committee's visiting committee, and the follow-up program carried out by the school to implement the findings of its own self-study and the valid recommendations of the visiting committee and those identified by the Committee in the Follow-Up process. Continued accreditation requires that the school be reevaluated at least once every ten years and that it shows continued progress addressing identified needs.

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

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At Tolland High School, a committee of nine 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. In addition to faculty members, the self-study committees included student and parent participation.

The self-study of Tolland High School extended over a period of twenty-four school months from March 2012 to March 2014. The visiting committee was pleased to note that students and parents joined the professional staff in the self-study deliberations.

Public schools evaluated by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools must complete appropriate materials to assess their adherence to the Standards for Accreditation and the quality of their educational offerings in light of the school's mission, learning expectations, and unique student population. In addition to using the Self-Study Guides developed by a representative group of New England educators and approved by the Committee, Tolland 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 evaluators was assigned by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate Tolland High School. The Committee members spent four days in Tolland, CT, reviewed the self-study documents which had been prepared for their examination, met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students and parents, shadowed students, visited classes, and interviewed teachers to determine the degree to which the school meets the Committee's Standards for Accreditation. Since the evaluators represented public schools and central office administrators, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Tolland High School.

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 36 hours shadowing 16 students
- a total of 16 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 and for student learning
- group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers
- the examination of student work including a selection of work collected by the school

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

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



## **SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY SUMMARY**

Tolland High School, located in Tolland County, in north central Connecticut, is the public high school for the Town of Tolland. According to the school's core values and beliefs statement, Tolland High School is a community of learners who show engagement and perseverance in their academic endeavors. Students are expected to demonstrate respect for self, others, and the environment; to be dependable and responsible citizens; and to act with integrity within the school and global community. The Tolland High School community is committed to providing a rigorous curriculum encompassing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in a safe, inclusive and enriching environment.

Tolland has a population of 15,071, and according to 2010 census, 93% of the population is Caucasian, with English being the primary language spoken at home. The Town of Tolland is 40.4 square miles in area and has a population density of 379 persons per square mile. The median household income is \$100,636 (2010 census) and the median age is 40. The Town is growing in population as the 1990 and 2000 censuses reported populations of 11,001 and 13,146 respectively. Tolland High School's 2010-2011 strategic school profile reports that 5.5% of its student body is a minority member and that 3.7% of its students is eligible for a free or reduced lunch program. In the past five years, there has been an 8.1% increase in enrollment. Over a three-year period beginning in 2008, the average per pupil expenditure in the district was \$10,917, compared to the State average over the same period of \$13,329. In 2010-11, Tolland allocated 67% of total expenditures to education.

There are four public schools in Tolland. Two are elementary, one middle, and one secondary, the latter serving grades 9 through 12. There were 937 students enrolled at Tolland High School during the 2011-2012 academic year. Tolland High School has a graduation rate of 94.8% (CT State average is 91.8%) and the attendance rate of its students is 96.4%. Upon graduation, 86.4% of Tolland High School students pursue higher education; the remaining 13.2% enters either civilian or military employment. In 2009-10 the high school dropout rate was 0.1%. Tolland High School also offers the opportunity for non-traditional students to earn their graduation requirements through the Tolland Alternative Learning Center (TALC). In the 2012-2013 school year, twenty students were enrolled in the program.

There are 62.5 classroom teachers at Tolland High School, creating a ratio of one teacher to 15.4 students. Tolland High School has four school counselors, one social worker, one school psychologist, one librarian, and one and one half-time school nurses. In the 2010-11 school year, Tolland High School teachers on average were absent due to illness or personal time 7.9 of the 186 contractual days. The average class size varies with the subject. The 2010-11 Strategic School Profile reports that an average Algebra I class size was 22.7, Biology 18.7, English, grade 10 was 20.3, and American History was 22.6. Students attend school for a minimum of 180 days and for a minimum of 1,014 hours. When compared with both State (26.4) and Demographic Reference Group (23.9) averages, Tolland is unusual in requiring 29 credits for graduation. Tolland High School is on a four by four block schedule. This use of time provides for more student/teacher contact time each day, enables teachers to use a variety of instructional techniques and provides students the opportunity to take 32 credits in their high school program.

All students enter Tolland High School concentrating on four core academic areas of English, mathematics, social studies, and science. Students in grades 9 through 12 may select from three academic levels, non-leveled, college preparatory, honors/Advanced Placement (when offered). Tolland High School offers a comprehensive curriculum including a variety of courses in business, computers, technology education, family/consumer science, world language and the arts. Course options for seniors include courses for college credit, community service, and supervised internships. Approximately 8% of Tolland High School students is identified with some type of learning difficulty and receives the appropriate special education services. Tolland High School enjoys a partnership with Manchester Community College in Manchester, CT where students are allowed to earn college credit in addition to earning high school credit for courses taken. Additionally, Tolland High School participates in the Early College Experience Program through The University of Connecticut where students enjoy dual enrollment for courses and also receive high school and college credit.

Approximately 71% of the student population participates on 22 interscholastic athletic teams. Tolland High School has been a previous conference champion with four different teams of the Eastern Division of the Central Connecticut Conference under the jurisdiction of the CIAC. Additionally, fine arts students (both in music and visual arts) participate in and are recognized for high achievement in both regional and statewide competitions. Tolland High School students are recognized for their accomplishments through several initiatives. These include Academic Awards Night; the CAPT Scholar's breakfast; Sports Awards Night; and the National Honor Society Induction.

The variety of student activities available to Tolland High School students include Student Council, Class Government, National Honor Society, Diversity Club, World Languages Club, Mock Trial, Gay-Straight Alliance, Peer Mediation, VISION (a student group dedicated to community service), Yearbook, *VOICES*, Unified Basketball, Audio Tech Club, Art Society, JETS, DECA, and *Sidetrax* (literary magazine). Field trips to other countries, chaperoned by faculty members, are open to all students in grades 10 through 12 who are in good academic standing. Student groups have traveled to Canada, Costa Rica, Spain, France, England, Scotland, and Ireland.

## **Tolland High School's Core Values and Belief Statement**

Tolland High School is a community of learners who show engagement and perseverance in their academic endeavors. Students are expected to demonstrate respect for self, others, and the environment; to be dependable and responsible citizens; and to act with integrity within our school and global community. The Tolland High School community is committed to providing a rigorous curriculum encompassing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in a safe, inclusive and enriching environment.

## **Tolland High School's Learning Expectations**

### **Academic**

The THS student will demonstrate:

- Effective communication through reading, writing, and speaking.
- Effective problem solving and critical thinking skills.
- Effective use and application of technology.

### **Social and Civic**

The THS student will demonstrate:

- Personal responsibility and productivity through positive contributions to society.
- Interpersonal skills that actively support and contribute to the community and school environment.
- Skills for personal growth as well as cultural and global awareness.

## Teaching and Learning Standard



### 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, as well as district and school community priorities.

## **CORE VALUES, BELIEFS, AND LEARNING EXPECTATIONS**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Tolland High School (THS) engaged in a dynamic, somewhat inclusive and collaborative process using some research-based best practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning. Beginning in 2012, a committee to develop the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations (CVBLE) was formed. The committee was made up of teachers from diverse departments, one student and one parent, who met and adapted behavioral expectations from Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports into school core values and beliefs. Information about 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills was referenced from the Partnership of 21st Century Skills organization as well as referencing other core values, beliefs, and learning expectations from schools with similar demographics to Tolland. A school survey given to the THS community in May 2012 also provided data for the CVBLE committee's review. The Endicott survey reported that 43.6 percent of staff says they feel THS's "core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations are clear" to them. The faculty eventually approved these values and beliefs. The five values have been incorporated into some aspects of Tolland High School, including teacher- and student-created classroom expectations, the school's website, student handbook, some coursework, administrative communication to parent and student groups, visual displays, and some curriculum, instruction and assessment. The school's advisory program actively integrates core values and beliefs in curriculum. Teachers, parents and students are able to identify and often can specify several of the core value words that comprise the word. Although the Endicott survey reports that parents and students are "familiar with my school's core values and beliefs about learning" (90.5 percent and 88 percent, respectively), in actual conversation, few were able to articulate all. Nearly every person interviewed spoke of deep and sincere "pride" in the school; the mutual respect felt by all community members was overt. The use of a collaborative and somewhat inclusive process informed by some current research enabled the school to identify its core values and beliefs about learning and when the school involves a broader base and number of participants, who are more fully informed by current research-based best practices, the statement will more fully represent and be embraced by the entire school community. (self-study, parents, students, facility tour, classroom observations, Endicott survey)

Tolland High School's relatively new learning expectations rubrics supplanted former, largely departmental rubrics and were developed by CVBLE over the last 18 months. The rubrics began to be

used in the fall and continue to be piloted at the time of the NEASC visit. To develop the rubrics, CVBLE conducted research by looking at rubrics from schools similar to Tolland and also by investigating several 21<sup>st</sup> century learning websites. The committee additionally used data from the Tolland Public Schools Strategic Plan focus groups, part of a UCONN Master's project, which included responses from many stakeholders in the Tolland community, including senior citizens, business employers, parents and students. Finally, CVBLE solicited, collected, and aggregated data from a survey of THS students and teachers in May 2012; the survey asked what skills a THS graduate should have in academic, social and civic domains. One analytical rubric was written for each 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectation. Rubric drafts, once completed, were given to curriculum liaisons for revision and eventually were voted on by the staff. The Tolland BOE approved the learning expectations as graduation requirements in December 2012. THS departments were assigned specific rubrics that aligned most closely with those disciplines, to ensure that all rubrics are used through the year; however, teachers in all departments are able to use all rubrics. Interviews with teachers suggested that virtually all teachers are generally familiar with the rubrics, and some reported using them as assigned. A limited number said they find the rubrics useful. Many teachers are using the rubrics in conjunction with assignment-specific or content-specific rubrics. The Endicott survey was completed before rubrics began to be piloted, so its findings on student and parent awareness are not relevant. Few students in meetings and conversations demonstrated even a limited awareness of the rubrics. In meetings, parents were not familiar with the rubrics. When all stakeholders become more aware and familiar with school-wide analytic rubrics, and when the rubrics are challenging in all departments, students will have enhanced opportunities to reach high levels of achievements. (self-study, parents, students, standards committees, Endicott survey)

Evidence was limited that the school's core values, beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations drive curriculum, instruction and assessment. The school's core values, beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations are sometimes reflected in the school's culture, sporadically drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment and sometimes guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions and resource allocations. Some assignments and activities, spurred by core values and beliefs or Tolland High School's learning expectations, were described and observed. Many classes showed limited use of 21<sup>st</sup> century best practices. Students similarly reported mixed experiences; while they could not specifically tie activities and assignments to values, beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, they described a number of assignments and activities that, in fact, do reflect core values or expectations. The school has begun the process of shaping its culture, curriculum, instruction and assessment according to core values

and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The state's new teacher evaluation plan has provided an opportunity for administrators and teachers to begin to effectively use the new rubrics. A number of teachers, with administrator guidance, used the rubrics or strands from them to set Student Learning Objective goals (SLOs) for the year. Tolland's culture sometimes supports its core values and beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations as seen in the school's advisory program. In its second year the advisory offers staff the opportunity to engage with students discussing important values and expectations. Specific classes like Culinary and Family and Consumer Science similarly enjoy support and offer students a chance to experience the core values and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations firsthand and directly. Programs like the new Student Senate, VOICES, and "Names Can Really Hurt Us" allow for increased student engagement and experiential education in important core values. The principal's thin student activity budget is stretched to cover some of these and other activities that promote core values and beliefs. Long-standing programs like TALC and the Vision Club already extensively promote core values and beliefs and incorporate many 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. When a commitment to support programs that align with the core values and beliefs of Tolland High School is made, it will ensure that those core values and beliefs are embedded in all classrooms, programs, and decisions. (Parents, classroom observations, Endicott survey, self-study report, interviews with teachers, interviews with students).

Tolland High School is considering some general possibilities for a continuous process for reviewing and revising its core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, and district and school community priorities. Administrators must continue to collect and aggregate data and work with faculty to establish Student Learning Objectives incorporating 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and rubrics. Members of CVBLE and administrators said they hope for quarterly committee meetings so that they can continue to consider core values and beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Curriculum liaisons have also asked for staff development to calibrate use of rubrics, so that ratings are consistent across staff, departments, and classes and thus more valid. Faculty infrequently showed deep understanding of our investment in use of the rubrics. CVBLE members spoke to the need for students to learn more about the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and associated rubrics; administrators added that they plan to work with parents next year, through Open House nights and other means, to increase understanding, since both parents and students rarely showed familiarity with the expectations or rubrics. Establishing a process to regularly review and revise the school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations which includes all of the school community and is based



on research, multiple data sources, as well as district and school community will help to ensure that all stakeholders are engaged, informed, and invested in the school's priorities and values. (classroom observations, curricular material, self-study, teacher interviews, parents, students)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The considerable work in creating school-wide rubrics
2. The initial implementation by some Tolland High School teachers of the newly revised school-wide rubrics in classrooms for various assignments
3. The creation of the advisory program with connections to core values
4. The tremendous amount of school “pride” that is evident in speaking with faculty, staff, students and parents
5. The use of rubrics in developing and implementing Student Learning Objectives in some teacher evaluations
6. Programs like the new Student Senate, VOICES, and “Names Can Really Hurt Us” that allow for increased student engagement and experiential education in important core values

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Ensure all school-wide analytic rubrics indicate the targeted high level of achievement
2. Develop and implement a process to ensure the school’s core values, beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations drive curriculum, instruction and assessment in every classroom
3. Develop and implement a process to ensure the school’s core values, beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations guide the school’s policies, procedures, decisions and resource allocations
4. Develop a formal schedule, which includes the school community in a collaborative process, to review and revise the school’s core values beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources as well as school and district priorities

## Teaching and Learning Standard

### 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.

# CURRICULUM

## CONCLUSIONS

Some curriculum of Tolland High School is designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Specific common assignments using the learning expectations are not articulated in the curriculum. While curriculum revisions have been in progress since August 2013, this revision is focused on a common electronic format and alignment to the Common Core State Standards. It does not reflect the school-wide analytical rubrics written to measure the 21<sup>st</sup> century standards Tolland High School has adopted. As these learning expectations are still in pilot for the 2013-2014 school year, data collected in Inform is more to assess student progress toward proficiency rather to make curricular decisions to revise courses or units from the curriculum. Some teachers could not articulate which learning expectation they were responsible for, although content areas have taken certain learning expectations as their responsibility. There is overlap between and among departments so students have multiple opportunities to meet these learning expectations. Curriculum documents do not reflect 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. While the district-wide common curriculum template does have a place on its first page for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to be delivered in the unit, curriculum documents provided do not reference them, listing Common Core standards instead. Some staff interviewed understood the learning expectations for which they are responsible. As Tolland High School continues to pilot its learning expectations and when the school adapts and customizes their use in all departments, all students will have opportunities to practice and achieve each learning expectation. (curriculum, curriculum subcommittee, teacher interviews)

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, and assessment practices. The curriculum does not include the use of school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics. The district has chosen a common curriculum template modeled after *Understanding by Design*, yet according to the self-study, 64 percent of curriculum is in the old format. Units moved to the new template are in various stages of completion. A curriculum map provided as evidence outlines one course in mathematics that has been completed. Nineteen courses are pending revision. English I, II, and III were completed at the time of the self-study. Some areas do not have a written curriculum. This holds true for the other content areas as well. Whether or not curriculums have essential questions, concepts,

content and skills depend solely on whether they are in the older paper version or in a completed, new electronic version. Essential questions on old and revised curriculums are more course-specific than true essential questions. The template does provide a place for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, however there is no evidence provided of alignment with those expectations. Due to the transitional phase of the curriculums, many are incomplete and lack instructional practices. There are some assessment tasks included but no curriculum provided includes rubrics, course-specific or school-wide analytic. A purposefully designed curriculum that includes the school's learning expectations and assessment practices using school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics will provide teachers with clarity for instruction, assessment, and learning opportunities for each student. (curriculum guides, curriculum committee, self-study)

Tolland High School curriculum has some evidence of depth of understanding and application of knowledge through inquiry, problem solving, higher order thinking and informed use of technology, but little evidence of purposeful cross-disciplinary learning or authentic learning both in and out of school. There is a place on the district common template for the DOK (Degrees of Knowledge) but not in the areas geared toward instructional practices and learning expectations. Given the incomplete state of the curriculum, there is little written evidence of depth of knowledge. While the self-study talks about the increased emphasis and expectation that the curriculum includes inquiry, problem solving and higher order thinking examples provided are anecdotal and there is little written or observed evidence to show wide-spread use. Classes observed were largely teacher-directed and focus on inquiry and problem-solving is dependent on the teacher not on the curriculum. While there are some opportunities for authentic learning both in and out of school, these opportunities are primarily limited to electives. What cross-curricular opportunities exist are informal and serendipitous more than a regular, formalized practice. Teachers identified that the four by four block makes cross-curricular work extremely difficult. Students receive explicit instruction on the ethical use of technology in their grade 9 English and social studies classes. When Tolland High School consistently emphasizes depth of understanding by using inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills, and when students apply this knowledge through cross-disciplinary and authentic learning, students will be more effectively prepared to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century learning challenges and expectations. (self-study, teachers, classroom observation, curriculum committee)

There is some indication of alignment between some written and taught curriculum, but due to the wide disparity of progress in curricula development and adherence to the school's common format it is

difficult to determine alignment. Some teacher observations are part of the new teacher evaluation process where lesson plans are presented to the observing administrator and are then used to determine the connection between the curriculum and instruction. Yet, given the transitional phase of the curriculum, which written curriculum is used for making this connection is not clear and the curriculum used may not be current. Common summative assessments are used in some subject areas which also reinforces the relationship between the written and taught curriculum. When the school completes writing all curricula in the common format and develops a process to establish clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum then all students will have equitable opportunities to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, classroom observation, teachers, administration)

Tolland High School has limited curricular coordination and vertical articulation between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district. Curriculum revision was to take place over a three-year cycle, but due to budget constraints actual revision work is selected based on consideration such as age of course and whether a new textbook is provided. Departmental time for curriculum coordination has been focused on aligning standards to course work. There are no formal opportunities for cross curricular coordination other than individual initiatives undertaken by a few teachers. Curriculum coordinators schedule high school departments to meet once per year with the sending school with the exception of English. They have not met with their middle school counterparts in three years. Written documents provided delineate course and units but not actual curriculum articulation between grades. There is a lack of articulation between the roles of the director of curriculum, the curriculum coordinators and curriculum liaisons that hampers the revision of curriculum. The principal and assistant principal, realizing the need, have worked with the mathematics and English departments to unwrap standards and to revise curriculum. When the Director of Curriculum and Instruction develops an organized process to complete the written curriculum and develops an organizational structure to ensure curricular coordination within and among academic areas as well as vertical articulation with sending schools, they will assist teachers in developing and delivering a consistent curriculum which will enable every student to have appropriate learning opportunities to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, teachers, administration, curriculum)

Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, class size, equipment, supplies, facilities and the resources of the library media center are minimally sufficient to support implementation of the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. Staffing needs are adequate except for the need for paraprofessional support in the library media center (LMC); however,

class sizes have increased over the past three years. The faculty reports decreases in the budget have limited instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, and LMC resources, which have had a negative impact on the delivery of the curriculum. The science department lacks sufficient monies for the routine maintenance of equipment, a number of computers lack sufficient memory to operate effectively, the business department has outdated texts and hands-on activities in consumer science have been significantly reduced. Also, budgetary decreases have affected some instruction and professional development. These decreases have seriously limited the transition to Common Core aligned curriculum and its implementation. Decreases have also impacted purchase of replacement textbooks and upgrading of technology to support the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Inadequate funding has negatively impacted co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. For example lack of funding made it impossible to replace burned out Klieg lights in auditorium, a blown bulb in the LCD in the art room, and lack of paper for the art program. This extends to the LMC and the inability to provide adequate staffing and online resources. When staffing levels, materials, technology, equipment and supplies are adequately provided, then students can be ensured that the proper provisioning exists for the delivery of the curriculum. (self-study, parents, teachers, curriculum committee)

The Tolland School District provides the school's professional staff with adequate financial resources and personnel for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research; however, there is a significant lack of adequate formal opportunities for teachers to accomplish this task. While the expenditures for professional and curriculum development has increased over the past three years and the district supports a district director of curriculum and curriculum coordinators, professional staff does not have adequate time provided for this curricular need. Staff have used a monthly sixty-minute professional learning community period for curriculum work but this has been used to write curriculum until this year when the time was focused on NEASC, Common Core, and SMART goals. Staff is involved in the realignment and upgrading of existing curriculum to Common Core, but there is no set cycle for curriculum review. Due to budget constraints actual revision work is selected based on considerations such as age of course and whether a new textbook is provided. A job description exists for each curriculum coordinator; however, there is no evidence of a written and organized plan for curriculum revision. Each core areas have curriculum liaisons. Curriculum liaisons are teaching positions, which receive stipends linked to number of department members. Release time has been provided to some departments for curriculum work and is available to other departments upon request. The curriculum and professional development budget has increased to fund completion and implementation curriculum. The

majority of this money has been earmarked for the transition to Common Core aligned curriculum. When the district provides the school's professional staff with sufficient formal time allocated to the collaborative development, evaluation and revision of curriculum based on assessment results and current research then the school will establish a curriculum framework for students to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, curriculum, teachers, administration, Endicott survey)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The building leadership support for curriculum work
2. The teachers who seek out cross-curricular opportunities
3. The funding for curriculum leadership positions
4. The explicit instruction provided to students on the ethical use of technology

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Embed 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations in all applicable course curricula
2. Implement a process, including a time line for completion, for all curriculum to be written in the school's common format which 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 analytic and course specific rubrics
3. Develop and implement a process that ensures all curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding, inquiry, problem solving, higher order thinking, cross disciplinary learning authentic learning, and informed and ethical use of technology
4. Develop and implement a plan to ensure effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation exists between and among all academic areas in the school as well as with sending schools in the district
5. Develop and implement a process to ensure alignment between written and taught curriculum in all subjects

6. Develop a process to ensure the district provides the school's professional staff with sufficient formal time and financial resources for the ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum based on assessment results and current research



## Teaching and Learning Standard



### 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.

## INSTRUCTION

### CONCLUSIONS

Teachers instructional practices are continuously examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values and beliefs; however there is little examination of alignment with the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Tolland High School is a community of learners committed to providing students with an environment that fosters the core values of perseverance, respect, integrity, dependability and engagement (PRIDE) and seeks to help students practice 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills. Teachers' instructional practices are frequently aligned with Tolland High School's core values as evidenced by work samples from a variety of classes. As cited in the Endicott survey, 55 percent of staff considers core values when planning lessons. Some student work suggests that this percentage may be higher as work samples from a variety of courses focus on exploring core values. For example, in English, grade 9 students were asked to describe what each core value looks like in the classroom and how each value connects to success. In health, students tracked their food intake and demonstrated perseverance toward their individualized health goals. In advisory, lessons focus on core values by collaboratively discussing examples of PRIDE in their school and personal lives.

As evident through interviews with a variety of teachers, collaboration is considered critical to student learning; however, the schedule does not permit many opportunities for collaboration, discussion and reflection throughout the school day. Teacher interviews suggested the staff would like the opportunity to observe the instructional practices of colleagues in order to reflect upon and improve teaching and learning. Some teachers collaborate and discuss instructional practices in a more informal way, frequently via email, over lunch or after school. Most feedback regarding instructional practices is received through evaluations with administrators. Professional learning communities (PLCs) or Critical Friends groups provide an opportunity for teachers to discuss and reflect upon instructional practices in a non-evaluative setting; however, PLC time has been allocated to work on curriculum revision and the creation of common assessments. Although there is an awareness of the need to teach 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, opportunities for students to use technology are limited by outdated hardware and limited access to and funding for technology. Teacher interviews indicated the lengthy time it takes students to log on to the school's computers negatively impacts instructional time. Although all core areas, aside from social studies, have a dedicated computer lab, class sizes often exceed the number of computers available, forcing teachers to compete for space in the library media center. In most computer spaces, excessive

log-in time, storage and compatibility issues are pervasive. To counteract this challenge, some teachers allow students to use their own personal devices (tablets, smartphones, etc.) during instructional time. However, this practice is not uniform; in some classes electronic devices are completely prohibited while in others they are openly encouraged. Evidence of other 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills is sporadic. There are some opportunities for students to demonstrate innovation, collaboration and information literacy skills as evidenced by samples of project-based and authentic learning which include student generated PowerPoint presentations, videos and films, wikis, and posters, but classroom observations, student work and student interviews suggest most learning is traditional and teacher-directed. Students frequently have opportunities to work collaboratively in a variety of formative and summative tasks which include problem sets in math, lab experiments in science, furniture making in Tech I, building a hovercraft in Tech II, and research projects in social studies and world languages. There are occasionally opportunities for students to participate in peer-to-peer teaching and learning, but these experiences are not common. Teachers' instructional strategies are continuously examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values and beliefs students are well aware of these connections. When the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations become a focus of teachers' instructional practices then students' learning will be enhanced. (self-study, teachers, classroom observation, student work)

Teachers' instructional practices somewhat support the achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations in various ways. Some teachers personalize instruction through after-school extra help sessions, the senior option, and Computer Aided Design (CAD) independent seminar study work. Although the Endicott survey reports that teachers personalize instruction 90 percent of the time on a daily or weekly basis, and 67 percent of the time on a daily basis, only 25 percent of the student respondents reports evidence of personalization of their instruction. Students did report that in the Native American course options are given about topics of interest to each student. In social studies, the Holocaust is connected to present-day bullying experiences through journal keeping and personalized "mind mapping." The self-study indicated that heterogeneous grouping and movement from teacher-directed to student-directed instruction is an area of need and one that is important for providing personalized instruction to all students.

Although the faculty survey indicates that the majority of teachers feel they engage students in cross-disciplinary learning at least once a week, student work samples, classroom observations and student interviews do not substantiate this claim. Video Production, Journalism and Broadcasting is the only cross-curricular co-taught class currently available to students. However, some cross-curricular

instruction does occur sporadically in other courses. The library media specialist (LMS) has co-taught lessons with science, social studies and art teachers. Together, the LMS and classroom teachers design and implement lessons which integrate content-specific concepts and skills with information literacy and technology. These lessons also provide opportunities for collaboratively assessed student work.

In some classes students are engaged in hands-on, project-based learning and discovery lessons which challenge their thinking as evidenced by the self-study report and student work. Teachers from eight departments provided multiple examples of active discovery lessons. Evidence includes student-produced games in computer science, laboratories without formal directions in science, Project Lead the Way in technology education and individual “dream houses” designed using CAD software. Students occasionally have opportunities to act as self-directed learners. Although the self-study suggests teachers believe students have opportunities to act as self-directed learners, there is an incongruity between students’ and teachers’ perceptions as the Endicott survey indicates that 51 percent of students recognizes opportunities for self-directed learning. As indicated by student work samples, in classroom observations and through conversations with students, the majority of instruction is teacher-directed, and assigned work is based on worksheets, which are completed independently. In some cases, teachers emphasize inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills: Advanced Placement (AP) Calculus, students design and construct model roller coasters, computer science students create video commercials, and scientific laboratory investigations allow students to apply inquiry skills. Teacher and student interviews and classroom observations indicate that teachers do not always spend sufficient time on essential questions which drive unit and lesson planning and allow students to understand and pursue concepts in depth.

Some students at Tolland High School apply their knowledge and skills to authentic tasks. Although the Endicott survey reports 48 percent of the student population believes they could apply what they learn at Tolland High School outside of the classroom, 80 percent of the faculty feels that they ask students to apply their knowledge and skills to authentic tasks on a weekly basis. Project-based learning experiences were observed and documented via student work samples across almost every discipline. In business and mathematics courses, students are required to create a company and explore the aspects of product production, as well as to evaluate constraints in order to maximize the company’s profit. Students enrolled in graphics class work in an active print shop producing print jobs requested by both the school and district for day-to-day business needs. Culinary Arts II students run a luncheon restaurant

open to faculty and community members. In addition, students in Introduction to Technology produce an authentic woodworking project of their choice.

However, teachers rarely engage students in self-assessment and reflection. Although still in the beginning stages of implementation, the consistent use of the self-assessment portion of each analytic rubric provides teachers with opportunities to connect learning to authentic tasks. Teacher and student interviews and classroom observations indicate that teachers rarely clarify for students that assessment is a part of learning process, and not simply an end of an activity evaluation. Despite inconsistent student self-assessment, there are some examples of specific and timely formative assessment; for example, written reflections in English following a writing assignment ask students to answer the question, "What do you know now that you didn't know before?"

Due to limitations, technology is not consistently integrated to enhance instruction where and when appropriate. Although some teachers report use of WebQuests, PowerPoint presentations, brochure-design programs, TI-84 calculators, Photoshop, AutoCAD Inventor 3D Solid Modeling, Edmodo, Minitab software, and Geometer's Sketch pad, many teachers, parents, and students indicate that computer software is out of date, that there is not enough storage space available on computers, that TI-84 calculators freeze, and that the IT department is understaffed and unable to attend to immediate hardware issues. Teachers reported that consistent budget constraints impact funding for technology and staffing needs. Additionally, there are limited professional development opportunities offered to staff which enable teachers to employ technology as a means of involving students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking. As the Tolland teaching staff continues to develop a variety of effective teaching strategies and practices, all students will have enhanced opportunities to excel as they strive to master the learning expectations. (student work, self-study, Endicott survey, classroom observation)

Teachers sometimes adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of students through formative assessment, strategic differentiation, purposeful grouping and providing additional support and strategies within the regular classroom. Some teachers use formative assessment to adjust instructional practices to meet student needs during instructional time. As evidenced through teacher interviews, teachers report a need for re-teaching and revision, but the structure of a semester-long block is limiting as teachers say that they spend most of their instructional time on summative assessments. Pre-tests are used in applied technology classes to collect data about the skill level of incoming students. Similarly, science teachers

use CAPT practice labs to assess students' ability to use the scientific method and general comprehension of concepts, and English teachers use summer reading and writing assignments to gauge the skill level of incoming students. There are few examples that suggest formative assessment is used in teachers' instructional practices. Nor is it clear that a variety of non-evaluative, ungraded formative assessments are in place for the purposes of assessing teaching and learning. Teacher interviews, classroom observations and student interviews suggest that immediate and specific feedback is provided following assessments, but this feedback is largely summative in nature and does not allow for student revision or relearning opportunities.

Although the self-study suggests Tolland High School teachers collect data via pre-assessments for the purposes of differentiated instruction, classes are mostly homogeneously grouped which teachers believe provide limited opportunities for differentiated lessons. Teacher interviews, classroom observations and student interviews do not suggest consistent use of differentiated learning materials and experiences. Limited tangible evidence of differentiation was provided through student work samples, lesson plans and classroom observations. Teacher, parent and central office staff interviews suggest a general recognition of differentiation as an area of improvement and an acknowledgement that differentiation is a topic for future in-house professional development opportunities.

There is evidence that suggests that some teachers at Tolland High School purposefully plan group learning opportunities designed to engage students in in-depth learning and to assist in collaborating. Student work samples, student interviews and classroom observations indicate that students work in groups. Students in science classes work together to complete laboratory experiments; math students work collaboratively to complete problem sets; Introduction to Tech I students work together to create the various parts of a folding table; and physical education students participate in various team-building activities such as "tower building." Group activities lend themselves to review, research and inquiry and also provide students with opportunities to practice 21<sup>st</sup> century skills like collaboration. The self-study reports that a school-wide rubric has been developed in this area to help measure students' interpersonal communication skills; however, there was no evidence of the use of this rubric in student work samples, classroom observations or teacher interviews.

Teachers at Tolland High School frequently provide extra-help sessions to students who need additional time to learn, but this occurs outside of the regular classroom time. Many teachers make themselves available after school, and students, parents, and the self-study indicate this access to extra help is

embedded in Tolland High School's culture. A late bus provides students with transportation home if they choose to stay after school. Teachers, students, and parents also indicate that other modes of extra help are available to students via email communication and various social networking sites like Edmodo. Teachers also use other online teaching tools from sites like Khan Academy and YouTube. As teachers more consistently adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of students through formative assessment, strategic differentiation, purposeful grouping and providing additional support and strategies within the regular classroom students will have enhanced opportunities to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (parents, self-study, students, classroom observation)

Teachers at Tolland High School sometimes individually and collaboratively improve their instructional practices through formative assessments, examining student work, using feedback from a variety of sources examining current research and engaging in professional discourse. The self-study reports that 78.2 percent of teachers use a variety of student achievement data to inform and improve instructional practices. There is some evidence that suggests student feedback, performance, informal assessments such as pre-tests assessing foundational knowledge and skills is used to shape instruction, although the majority of student work samples provided are summative in nature. Some work samples shared with the committee, which were intended to illustrate the use of this data and its impact on instructional practice, were incomplete and lacking critical student feedback. A review of the CAPT and SAT data indicates critical reading skills is an area in need of improvement, but there is limited evidence of how teachers are working individually or collaboratively to improve this skill area.

Presently, there is no common, formal process at Tolland High School designed to elicit student, parent or other teachers' feedback regarding instruction. Some teachers gather student feedback regarding instruction informally via exit slips and class discussion. Teachers receive instructional feedback via administrative evaluations. PLC teams are in place and are intended to provide teachers with opportunities to discuss student achievement data and effective instructional strategies designed to improve school-wide teaching and learning. The self-study, teacher interviews and standards subcommittee meetings explain that in recent years, PLC time has been allocated for other purposes such as curriculum writing and NEASC preparation. This time is considered to be valuable, and teacher interviews suggested the Tolland High School staff is looking forward to the opportunity to participate in formal meetings specifically dedicated to the examination of student work within their content areas and across disciplines to improve instructional practices. Interviews with special education teachers confirm that PLC time is deemed vital for collaboration and examination of instructional strategies, and special

education teachers expressed a desire to work with grade- or content-specific PLCs. The use of the computer data tracking system, Inform, will allow teachers to track and continually measure student achievement data and provide opportunities for focus, reflection and discussion in some PLC teams. Teacher interviews also indicate a desire to observe peers in a non-evaluative, informal way to learn new instructional strategies and observe best practices in action.

Some teachers examine current research related to teaching and learning. As evidenced by interviews and work samples, some teachers seek out professional development opportunities by participating in webinars, attending trainings, seminars and conferences on and off campus. Some teachers seek out content-specific workshops, such as AP conferences, as well as workshops focusing on best teaching practices. This summer a science teacher will attend the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) conference and the computer science teacher regularly seeks out professional enrichment opportunities by attending seminars and workshops in her content area. Last summer she was able to attend a workshop provided by Oracle by applying for and receiving grant funding from the company.

Additionally, instructors who teach a UCONN accredited course are required to complete the course they teach. Additionally, the faculty does have access to professional literature through the library media center. Offerings include books on student motivation, reflective school practices, multiple intelligences, and inclusion strategies. Teacher interviews suggested that professional development opportunities are self-initiated. Teacher interviews indicated a desire for more in-house professional development training which focus on identified areas of improvement and need.

Teacher interviews and the self-study suggest there is a culture of informal collaboration at Tolland High School. The block schedule makes scheduling common planning time a challenge, so teachers engage in professional discourse with colleagues after school, during lunch and via email. As is mandatory for Connecticut teaching certification, beginning teachers are paired with a mentor in their department for the Teacher Educator and Mentor (TEAM) program, and first- and second-year teachers meet regularly with mentors to complete the required modules. As teachers continue to improve their teaching practices and seek opportunities to expand their repertoire of effective strategies through the review of formative assessments, examining student work, using feedback from a variety of sources examining current research and engaging in professional discourse, student achievement will improve. (teachers, student work, students, parents, classroom observation)

Teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. As evidenced by the self-study and log of professional



development over the past few years, many teachers at Tolland High School are committed to remaining well-informed in their content areas. Some teachers receive subscriptions to content-specific journals and magazines. Provided PLC summative reflection and feedback from administrators demonstrates teacher self-reflection; however, most conversations regarding instructional practices with colleagues occur informally. The Whole Building Screen of Instructional Practices form provides teachers with an opportunity to observe and peer evaluate their colleagues; however, data is shared with faculty via email and discussed during faculty meetings for the purpose of improving instruction. Through the self-study report and teacher interviews, staff has indicated a desire and a need for additional time for teacher collaboration. Some teachers have suggested the implementation of schedule changes to allow for common planning time. Additionally all teachers must maintain their Connecticut teacher certification which requires continuous improvement in their content areas. As teachers continue to reflect on their instructional practices and maintain expertise in their content areas, students will benefit as they strive to achieve the learning expectations. (Endicott survey, self-study, teacher interviews, student work, students , parents, classroom observations)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The core values and beliefs are present in a variety of instructional activities
2. The core values and beliefs are evident in teachers' commitment to providing extra help to students who need additional learning time
3. The daily late bus to support student learning beyond the school day
4. The rich elective course offerings provide opportunities for authentic, real-world learning activities and projects
5. The various samples of student work that are displayed throughout the building
6. Many teachers at Tolland High School are committed to remaining well-informed in their content areas
7. Teachers seek out professional development opportunities to access best teaching practices

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Incorporate school-wide professional development training in differentiated instruction, co-teaching, and the use of formative assessments for effective instruction for students at all levels
2. Integrate special education teachers into content area PLCs
3. Increase the use of student assessment data to plan, design, and inform instruction
4. Increase opportunities for students to engage in cross-disciplinary learning
5. Develop and implement a process to ensure all students are engaged in inquiry, problem-solving and higher order thinking
6. Develop and implement a plan to integrate appropriate technology into instructional practices

## Teaching and Learning Standard

### 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.

## **ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT LEARNING**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Tolland High School has created 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and school-wide rubrics which are in the beginning stages of being employed through a formal process to assess individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The school-wide rubrics address a variety of academic, social and civic expectations to be measured for student growth. These expectations are in the areas of personal growth and cultural awareness, interpersonal skills, personal responsibility, technology, problem-solving and critical thinking, communication through speaking, communication through writing, and communication through reading. Each of the eight rubrics is separated into multiple assessment criteria. Each department has selected a minimum of two learning expectations and is responsible for assessing individual students at least twice per semester, per course. Some teachers have administered the rubrics and entered the data into PowerSchool. However, the use of school-wide rubrics is inconsistent; and some departments seem to be using them more than others. Inform, a data management system, is used to extrapolate indicators from learning expectations and the assistant principal is responsible for ensuring that the data is being entered. Although the learning expectation scores are not averaged into the student's course grade, they are used to measure the students' progress toward meeting proficiency on the school-wide learning expectations. The assistant principal said that the plan is to review the last three semesters of the student's junior and senior years, and analyze this data in PLCs and for teacher goal setting. Students, parents, and teachers are unclear about the existence of these rubrics and how the students' progress will be monitored. Although the school notes in the self-study that students are given the opportunity to self-assess, there is limited evidence that this is happening. When the school fully implements their formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess all students' achievement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, students will have a clear picture of their progress in achieving the school's learning expectations. (self-study, teacher interviews, student shadowing, parents, school leadership, student work)

Currently, Tolland High School has designated benchmark dates and times in which they formally report students' academic performance to parents and students (i.e. progress reports and report cards); however, these reporting devices do not communicate individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup>

century learning expectations nor the school's progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Although there are set benchmarks dates built into the school calendar, the system to communicate individual student progress in achieving each of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations is in the early stages of development. There is little evidence to support the communication process of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to students and their families. Parents were unfamiliar with learning expectations and the use of school-wide rubrics. In addition, most students said they had only been assessed on one or two rubrics. Once a formal plan to communicate individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to students and their families and the whole school's progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to the school community is implemented, a basis for improved student learning will be provided. (parents, self-study, teacher interviews, school leadership)

There is some evidence that the staff of Tolland High School collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement, but these are not related to students' success in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. According to the self-study, teachers use data from PowerSchool, Mastery Manager, and Scantron assessments to analyze student performance. Staff looks at mean, median and mode to gauge student performance on each assessment and to do error analysis. For example, the English department uses Scantrons to conduct error analysis. They use this information to determine the need to re-teach, remediate, revise, and clarify assessment items. Some members of the science department use Mastery Manager to do item analysis of the science state standards on common assessments. Additionally, members of the math department find the mean and frequency distribution of various assessments. This data is shared with students to inform them of their achievement in relation to their peers and helps the math teachers adjust future instruction and assessments as well. While some teachers collect and review student work and look at it in PLCs, there is no evidence that they disaggregate, and analyze a range and variety of data/results, including formative and summative assessments to identify inequities in student achievement. Currently, it is challenging for teachers to review student work that has been assessed using school-wide analytic rubrics, since the use of these rubric is limited. As noted in the self-study, analysis of data from classroom assessments is not uniform among teachers or across departments. Beginning in the fall of 2013, the four core academic content areas began focusing on SMART goals and analytic rubrics. When data is collected, disaggregated, and analyzed, inequities in student achievement will be identified and then can be responded to by faculty members which will allow students' needs to be more effectively addressed. (self-study, teacher interviews, teachers)

Many teachers communicate unit-specific learning goals to be assessed at the beginning of each unit of study; however, inconsistencies exist in communicating the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. In the samples of student work provided, there was little evidence showing the use of 21st century learning expectations as a learning goal for the lesson. According to the 2012 Endicott survey, 55.7 percent of students surveyed was in total agreement with the statement, “My teachers explain what the learning expectations are before each unit of study.” THS is in the process of developing and implementing a formal plan to consistently assess and report 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to parents and students. The practice of communicating 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals fosters increased student and parent engagement in the learning process, which helps to ensure students are achieving at a high level. (student work, students, Endicott survey)

Prior to summative assessments, some teachers provide students with corresponding rubrics related to unit specific learning goals, but seldom to applicable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning goals. While students reported that most faculty members provide them with course-specific, corresponding rubrics for projects and other large assignments, the data from the Endicott survey indicates otherwise. Forty-one percent of staff states they communicate to students the school’s learning expectations and corresponding rubrics. While some students stated that they are given unit assignments and rubrics at the beginning of a unit, particularly in English, science, math, and business classes, they also noted that format and frequency of rubric usage is not uniform amongst teachers or across departments. Some teachers have embraced the concept of using the course-specific combined with school-wide rubrics, while others have expressed that the school-wide rubrics need to be refined to meet the needs of all. Since this is a pilot year, faculty plans to formally assess and modify school-wide rubrics. Providing students with corresponding rubrics prior to summative assessments, allows students to know how their learning will be assessed. (Endicott survey, teacher interviews, students, self-study)

The teachers at Tolland High School employ a range of both formative and summative assessment strategies throughout and at the close of each unit of study. Teachers and students reported the use of formative assessments in a variety of forms. (i.e., quizzes, exit cards, Turning Point, warm-ups) While these are used to gauge student understanding, there is no evidence that the results have been used to impact instruction. There is little evidence that formative assessment drives instruction. The evidence shows that summative assessments are used regularly. There is much evidence to support authentic assessment in the career and technical education areas. Culinary students provide a restaurant

experience for community members; engineering students participate in Project Lead the Way which is aligned with STEM; technical ed students design, build, and race a hovercraft; and finance students create a career portfolio which culminates with interviews conducted by members of the business community. The evidence also shows that the fine arts department uses authentic formative and summative assessments in written critiques of performances or art. There was some evidence of project-based, summative assessments in core areas; for example, using scrapbooks and creating movie trailers in English classes, labs in science, and utilizing formulas and software to create drawings in math. Classroom observations, standard evidence samples, and student interviews provided a preponderance of the evidence that indicates that tests are the most frequently used summative assessment in the core academic areas. Employing a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments, provides students with a diverse range of opportunities to demonstrate learning and helps teachers more effectively meet the learning needs of the students in their classroom. (self-study, teacher interviews, students, student shadowing)

All teachers have opportunities to collaborate in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments. Professional learning communities have been established to write curriculum, to share student work, and to analyze the results of student assessments. The PLCs have the autonomy to determine the focus of each meeting; hence they are in different stages of the curriculum writing process, as well as in the creation and use of common assessments. Teachers indicate the need to develop anchor sets to define criteria on school-wide rubrics. PLCs and professional development opportunities allow teachers to work collaboratively on assessments, curriculum and instruction. However, teachers are currently using the majority of formal time to write curriculum and therefore are unable to analyze and respond to other data from assessments. As a result, the school-wide rubrics currently have little, if any, impact on curricular change or instructional improvement. Appropriate allocation of regular formal opportunities for teacher collaboration provides a basis to improve student learning. (panel discussion, assessment standard subcommittee, teacher interviews, self-study)

Most teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work. There is a wide array of formative assessment strategies used to ensure understanding of content vocabulary. In science, Turning Point is used to provide immediate feedback using clicker responses, while in math classes warm-ups and homework checks are utilized. In band and art classes, students are required to use content-specific vocabulary while discussing and critiquing student work.



When surveyed, 46 of 68 teachers said that they used immediate, one-on-one verbal feedback to provide formative assessment so students could revise/improve their work. According to the Endicott survey, 75 percent of students agree that teachers assess/correct work in a reasonable amount of time. In addition, 57 percent of students responded that they receive feedback to revise and improve their assignments. In some written assignments, a rough draft due date is assigned, and students are able to improve final projects based on written suggestions from the teachers. In addition, students stated that the college essay process includes many opportunities for revisions based on input from teachers. Although students stated they are not typically provided opportunities to revise on summative quizzes and tests, students stated that they could approach individual teachers if needed and request extended help sessions to ensure mastery of content. Because many teachers provide specific, timely and corrective feedback it ensures that most students have the information they need to meet the learning expectations in each course. (Endicott survey, self-study, students, teacher survey)

Many teachers independently use formative assessments to adapt their instruction to improve student learning; however, there is not a process in place to ensure that this occurs in all classes. Algebra students do warm-ups at the start of each day to review skills and check for understanding of concepts. If students struggle with the warm-up, more review is warranted. Teachers direct instruction accordingly. Edmodo is used to post questions in biology. This enables teachers and students to continue dialog and to provide immediate feedback outside of normal school hours. Exit cards were also provided as evidence and are used to plan for subsequent instruction. Students stated that Jeopardy and other games are tools used to measure understanding prior to unit assessments. Through the regular use of formative assessments, teachers ensure that their instruction meets the most immediate learning needs of the students. (self-study, teacher interviews, students)

Teachers and administrators report that they, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice. The evidence shows that teachers periodically change their assessments (e.g., science provided evidence that the freshmen Kinetic Theory and Temperature assessment changed from one year to the next; math provided exam results on Algebra I midterms and finals, and social studies included assessments from civics and world history). However, there is no explanation about how the students' performance impacted the creation of the new assessments. Teachers made general comments about wanting the students' grades to increase, but there is no evidence to explain the revisions they made were related to an analysis of previous student work. Teachers note in the self-study that "70 percent of THS teachers

adapt their instructional practices and lesson plans multiple times per week.” However there is no evidence of changes in lesson planning. There was no evidence of surveys from current students or alumni. Tolland High School has recently assimilated core values and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations into the school environment. Teachers and administrators voted on this set of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and are implementing them school-wide this year. Some teachers are also incorporating these 21<sup>st</sup> learning expectations in their course-specific rubrics. The corresponding school-wide rubrics, which focus on ongoing examination of a student’s progress in achieving the 21<sup>st</sup> century goals, are being piloted by the entire school this year. Individual student progress in attaining these rubric goals will be captured in PowerSchool and will be accessible to students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Tolland High School receives results from such standardized assessments as CMT, CAPT, state CTE assessments and SAT. There is informal department-wide analysis and discussion of achievement in various standards and achievement of specific students. Data sent from the Tolland Middle School contains course recommendations from middle school teachers. Tolland High School special education teachers attend Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings at the middle school to determine appropriate placement. In addition, counselors attend both 504 and PPT meetings at the middle school to assist in appropriate placement for those students. As students enter the high school, the school counseling office receives a file containing past report cards and standardized test results. Administrators and counselors use this information to place students in appropriate courses. Most post-secondary schools do not provide the high school with any assessment evidence, and student achievement after graduation is not tracked. Manchester Community College does provide percentages of students that place into college level English and math courses. During the spring of 2013, the high school administered The Bernhardt survey to gather feedback from all students, parents, and teachers. Some teachers also use their own individual end-of-course surveys/questionnaires, but that information is not shared in any formal manner. Currently, the high school does not formally survey alumni. When teachers and administrators consistently collaborate to examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice, they will more effectively meet the learning needs of students. (panel discussion, assessment standard subcommittee, teacher interviews, self-study)

Grading and reporting practices have yet to be regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school’s core values and beliefs about learning. While teachers reported that they use PLC time to review student work and common assessments, they said that they do not discuss grading practices in light of the core values and beliefs about learning. The self-study materials show that there is a grading

policy in the handbook that outlines the basic school guidelines for grading (e.g., “The marking system of Tolland High School is numerical grading with a passing grade of 65.” “An incomplete grade should be made up no later than two weeks after report cards are issued.”) A copy of the last faculty handbook (2012-2013) shows that some general information about the grading policy had changed to include information like “Grades are issued at the end of each quarter. Progress reports will no longer be sent home with students unless requested by the parent in writing.” However, there is no evidence that shows that these changes have been based on the review of the beliefs about learning. There is no evidence that the grading practices are consistent across all subject or curricular areas. As noted in the self-study, while the administration annually reviews the school’s grading and reporting practices, in the future this review will ensure alignment with the core values and beliefs about learning. The regular review of grading and reporting practices to align them with school’s core values and beliefs about learning ensures that all students are assessed equitably as they strive to achieve the learning expectations. (teacher interviews, self-study, assessment committee, teacher interviews,)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The emphasis in the career and technical education areas to use active learning strategies and authentic assessment
2. The common practice of communicating unit specific goals to students prior to each unit of study
3. The use of common assessments in several course areas
4. The regular use of formative assessments
5. The timely feedback on summative assessments

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Fully implement the school’s formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess individual student progress in achieving the school’s 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills
2. Develop and implement a process to aggregate individual student results based on the school-wide use of the school’s 21<sup>st</sup> century analytic rubrics
3. Develop and implement a process to communicate individual student progress in achieving the school’s 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to students and their families

4. Develop and implement a process to determine the school's progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and communicate that progress to the school community
5. Ensure professional staff collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement
6. Implement a process to ensure all teachers regularly use formative assessments to inform and adapt their instructional practices for improved student learning
7. Ensure teachers and administrators examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice
8. Review and revise grading and reporting practices to align with the school's core values and beliefs about learning

## Support Standard



### 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 board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
12. The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school.

## **SCHOOL CULTURE & LEADERSHIP**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The Tolland High School community has consciously built a safe, positive, respectful and supportive culture that supports shared ownership and pride. The school's established core values and beliefs are based on their Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The core values and beliefs statement incorporates the behaviors of perseverance, respect, integrity, dependability, and engagement (PRIDE), and they are found in the student and parent handbook, are displayed throughout the school, and students, teachers, and parents are familiar with them. The handbook also reflects high expectations in terms of attendance, and the attendance policy is enforced, based on a conversation with the school principal. NEASC committee members observed well-behaved, respectful students in classrooms and throughout the school. Students interviewed believe their teachers care about them, and the parent and teacher interviews supported their statements. Students are not allowed to carry backpacks, or have water bottles, and one student commented that it was because "the teachers care about us." Discipline is consistent and enforced at the school, where offenses are separated as major versus minor, and consequences are clearly communicated to students in the handbook. Discipline data is collected and analyzed by administration. There is a Student Intervention Team (SIT) and after-school detention. Programs at the school that support improving school climate include advisory, VOICES, drug and alcohol awareness programs, and the "Names Can Really Hurt Us" program. One student from each advisory group is elected to be part of the Student Senate, which meets quarterly with the principal to discuss school issues. There are athletics, clubs and activities available for students, although many are fee-based. Activities are well-attended by students and parents. As a result of the programs and efforts by teachers and administrators, students feel safe and are part of a respectful, supportive environment that fosters student responsibility for learning. School officials also provide multiple opportunities for students to engage in leadership skill building.(self-study, students, parents, teacher interviews, student handbook, classroom observations)

Tolland High 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 and has the opportunity to take additional heterogeneously grouped courses during their high school experience. According to the Endicott survey, 87 percent of the staff at Tolland High School is in agreement with the statement, "The school requires every student, over the course of the high school experience, to enroll in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core course." The program of

studies and the self-study identify that the heterogeneously grouped course is Civics, which is also a graduation requirement. Students have the opportunity to take other heterogeneously grouped courses, however they are not required. There are a total of 33 heterogeneously grouped courses that are outside the core course areas. In the program of studies, courses are identified as standard, non-leveled, college preparatory, and honors/AP/UCONN ECE. The Endicott survey results show that 72 percent of the students at Tolland High School agrees that they have “a number of opportunities to take courses in which students of varying levels of ability are enrolled.” This percentage was fairly consistent across grade levels, indicating that students were not just referring to the Civics course, which is only a 12th grade course. Only 11 percent was in total disagreement with that statement. In the self-study there was some mention of efforts to group students more heterogeneously, as Tolland High School is looking to expand the requirement of heterogeneity in core courses. The self-study indicates feedback from the faculty was solicited regarding four possible options to address this area. The curriculum liaisons, with input from staff, have decided to add at least one heterogeneously grouped core class at the freshman level while the manner and date of implementation will be determined in the future. In the Five-Year Targeted Plan, Tolland High School indicates that they will reduce the number of levels in the ninth grade core areas. As a result of every student being enrolled in one heterogeneously grouped required course and opportunities in many elective classes, THS has established an educational environment that is equitable and inclusive. (self-study, teacher interviews, Endicott survey, program of studies, classroom observations)

At Tolland High School, advisory is a formal, ongoing program which was designed so each student has an adult in the building, in addition to his or her school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school’s learning expectations and core values. Advisory meets two times per month, on Tuesdays after the first block, and lasts for thirty minutes. There is an Advisory Design Team (ADT) that consists of four teachers and the principal, and they meet during the professional learning community (PLC) time to plan lessons for the program. The self-study and standard subcommittee interview described that lesson plans vary by grade level and are written to help achieve three goals: provide academic support and coaching, promote meaningful student-to-teacher relationships, and establish a sense of belonging, connectedness, and pride in the school. The ADT seeks feedback from teachers after each advisory meeting, asking what went well, what was difficult or challenging, and what one thing could be done to improve the activity. Student feedback was fairly indifferent to the benefits of the advisory program. Based on conversation with students, teachers and



the ADT, students do not have input into advisory lesson planning, and are not consistently asked for feedback across all advisory groups. The Five-Year Targeted Plan identifies a strategy for advisors to gain autonomy in the decision-making process regarding scheduled activities for their advisories. Teacher interviews indicated some teachers are satisfied with the current structure, in which plans and activities are provided directly by the ADT. As a result of a consistent advisory program, students have an adult to whom they can talk and are supported academically and socially if they need to express their concerns. (self-study, students, teacher interviews, Endicott survey)

Teachers and administrators at Tolland High School have opportunities to engage in professional discourse for reflection and analysis of teaching and learning as well as formal time to occasionally participate in professional development; however, the opportunities to use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices is limited and the connections of these professional development opportunities to improving student learning is unclear. At Tolland High School, the 2013-2014 school-year calendar includes six full-faculty meetings, ten curriculum liaison meetings, and ten PLC meetings. Five of the department meetings are dedicated to Common Core State Standards (CCSS) work, per the calendar. The calendar states that department meetings typically follow the curriculum liaison meeting dates. Additionally, the school calendar indicates there are voluntary meetings planned for differentiation/technology professional development offerings. The PLC structure is in place and referred to by administration and teachers. Evidence shows that collaboration among teachers is limited and structured. When asked, teachers refer to collaborating only if they happen to share a prep period, which is rare with a 4x4 block schedule. Teacher feedback indicates the PLC time is sometimes used for other work such as writing curriculum and goal setting. Most collaboration that was mentioned by teachers was within their departments and not across departments. Professional development resources outside of the school are open to teachers but which are subject to approval by the principal. The professional development report for the 2012-2013 school year includes teacher attendance at workshops and training sessions that involve Common Core State Standards, CAPT scoring, TEAM reflection reviewer training, DECA leadership and competition, curriculum, assessment, differentiation, and technology. The budget for professional development can be limited due to a history of it being frozen at some point during the year. The self-study also states exposure to outside experts for all teachers and staff in recent years is limited. The Endicott survey results show that only 35 percent of the staff is in total agreement that the school's PD programs enable teachers to acquire and use skills to improve instruction and assessment, and 40 percent is in total disagreement with that statement. When the principal and professional staff are actively engaged in reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and

learning through professional development, in and outside of the school; then the application of the skills, practices and ideas gained will improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. (teacher interviews, self-study, Endicott survey)

School leaders sometimes use research-based evaluation processes, approved by the state, that focus on improving student learning. According to the Endicott survey, 64 percent of staff at Tolland High School agrees that input from supervisors who are responsible for evaluating their teaching plays an important role in improving their instructional practices. Teacher interviews indicated that half of the teachers at Tolland High School are being evaluated this school year on the Tolland Public Schools Teacher Professional Learning and Evaluation Plan, and the other half on the previously-established district plan. In terms of observations of classroom practice, the Tolland High School evaluation plan explains that teachers following the Tolland Public Schools Teacher Professional Learning and Evaluation model participate in two formal and one informal observation, with the formal observations including both pre- and post-conferences. The Tolland Public Schools Teacher Professional Learning and Evaluation Plan model requires teachers to set student learning outcomes (SLOs), measured by indicators of academic growth (IAGD), written in SMART goal format, and developed in collaboration with the supervising administrator. Additional components of this plan address peer feedback and whole-school student learning goals. Teachers look for evidence of instructional practices in terms of environment, instruction for active learning, and assessment for learning during an observation period. Tolland High School teachers have also used different iterations of an instructional rounds process. In 2012-13, a structured-tuning protocol was employed with five teachers and the principal. In the 2013-14 school year, teachers are required to observe the teaching practice of four colleagues and to provide general feedback, which in turn will be analyzed from the perspective of the whole-school instructional practice. Reports from the past three school years list a variety of professional development workshops and conferences that building administrators have attended to further their knowledge and leadership skills. Most recently, building administrators were trained in the state's tuning and normalization training for implementation of the SEED evaluation program. The self-study details that district administrators have participated in book studies as a means to have common conversations focused on current educational themes. Recent titles discussed include *Instructional Rounds in Education* and *Leaders of Learning*. Consequently, school leaders are using research-based evaluation and supervision process that focuses on students' learning and teachers' growth and development. (self-study, administration interviews, teacher interviews, evaluation supervision plans)

The organization of time provides the opportunity to employ research-based instructional practices, but inhibits the time available for professional collaboration among teachers. Tolland High School has used a 4x4 block schedule for several years, and the self-study states this structure supports a student-centered schedule. They have researched other schedules, including a five-day rotating block and a six-period day and spelled out the pros and cons of each format in an organizational chart. The 4x4 block was chosen mainly for the purpose of maximizing educational time by reducing the number of transitions and for the additional benefit of increasing the total number of credits a student can earn to 32. There is a 25-minute lunch wave built into the third block and a 30-minute advisory built in two times per month. School starts at 7:15 a.m. each day and ends at 1:43 p.m. In theory, the block schedule supports collaborative learning of students and inquiry-based instruction, but classroom observations showed an inconsistent use of those instructional practices. The block schedule leaves little time for teacher collaboration. According to teacher feedback, collaboration occurs on an informal basis during the day if teachers share a common planning time. A formal meeting schedule is established for after-school teacher meetings including whole staff, department, and PLCs. Tolland High School does house an Alternative Learning Center (TALC) for students who are better served after the typical school day, as well as allow an early dismissal for seniors who have work or internships. When the school's organization of time supports both researched based instructional needs as well as professional collaboration among teachers the learning needs of students will be better met. (self-study, teacher interviews, daily schedule, block schedule analysis)

In some cases, student load and class sizes enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students. Class sizes at Tolland High School are capped at 28 students. According to the Endicott survey, 78 percent of students feel the class sizes in their courses are reasonable, and 87 percent of their parents agrees with that statement. However, only 42 percent of staff feels that their student load and class sizes enable them to meet the learning needs of individual students. Discussions with teachers suggest this low percentage may be driven by courses in which class sizes are at the maximum. Teachers commented that classes of closer to 20 students are much more manageable, and they can devote more time and attention to individual students. Additionally, they are able to plan lessons that are more engaging for students when class sizes are not at the maximum. Teacher load while fairly consistently in the 120 student average can range significantly within a department with differences of 50 plus students between one teacher and another. The self-study and staff interviews reveal that the previous add/drop policy contributed to an imbalance in class size.

Students were allowed to change classes for a variety of reasons that were not always educationally based. This year, the add/drop process limits the reasons for the change and tightens the timeline. Teacher and counseling department interviews indicated that the new policy has helped with the fluctuation of class size at the beginning of the semesters. When equitable class sizes and teacher loads are maintained, then all students will benefit from the ability of their teachers to meet their individual learning needs. (Endicott survey, staff interviews, self-study)

The principal, working with other building leaders, has provided instructional leadership that is sometimes rooted in the school's core values, beliefs and learning expectations. The principal has helped to rewrite the math curriculum and one of the assistant principals helped to rewrite the language arts curriculum. In addition, instructional leadership is provided through the structure of the evaluation process by the principal and assistant principals. The principal serves as a member of the Curriculum Liaison Team, Advisory Design Team, Student Intervention Team, K-12 Curriculum and Technology committees, and the Website committee. Her participation on these teams and committees, which solicits input from other building leaders, provides the principal with the opportunity to demonstrate instructional leadership that directly affects multiple stakeholders in the school community. Specifically, the minutes from a sample curriculum liaison meeting reflect topics dominated by points of information with one item specifically addressing the leveling of classes with solicitation of input from teachers. The principal designs and delivers lessons for VOICES, a practice that allows her a direct connection to solicit student input and to provide instruction that reinforces the school's core values and beliefs. The Tolland High School Organizational Chart details a shared leadership model with supervision and evaluation responsibilities, as well as program coordination, split among all three building level administrators. As a part of the supervision and evaluation process, building level administrators support the creation of teachers' SMART goals related to improving student achievement. When the school's core values and beliefs are clearly and overtly integrated into the instructional leadership then these values and beliefs help drive instruction. (self-study, organizational chart, administrative team interviews)

Teachers, students, and parents are often involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership. Students at Tolland High School, as well as their parents, are afforded opportunities to participate in the decision-making process to improve teaching, learning and the overall high school experience. Formal structures that exist for students to provide their feedback relative to issues directly affecting them include the VOICES program and Student Senate. The self-

study refers to student participation on teacher hiring committees as another opportunity for student input. Parents, as well as community members, are invited to participate in Community Advisory Council meetings held monthly with the principal. Agendas for those meetings address a variety of topics including heterogeneous core courses, state-mandated testing, grade weighting, and school/business partnerships. The Community Advisory Council also allows for parents and community members to voice their questions and concerns. The self-study refers to parents also being invited to participate in the hiring of coaches and administrators. Collaboration between and among parents, students and teachers, to support student learning and achievement exists in the form of organizations and programs such as Booster Club, Project Graduation, the Eagle Scramble, and the Tolland High School Scholarship Fund. During the school year, additional feedback has been collected from parents, students, and teachers in the form of Strategic Planning, School Climate, and Endicott surveys. The self-study details limited formal structures for teacher input outside of bi-monthly advisory lesson reflection questions, but teachers do participate in hiring committees, and believe that the principal has a desire to listen to teacher input. As result of the shared leadership, teachers, students, parents, and community members have opportunities to be involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership. (self-study, students, parents, teacher interviews)

Teachers at Tolland High School often exercise initiative and leadership essential to improve the school and to increase student learning. Teachers at Tolland High School have undertaken various leadership roles that directly contribute to the school improvement. A group of teachers has volunteered its time throughout the 2013-14 school year to facilitate technology workshops in the usage of online tools, operating systems, and software. Teachers report that the utilization of the faculty's expertise is a well-received model for professional development. There is an established set of extracurricular activities, addressing a variety of possible student interests, for which various teachers serve in active leadership roles. Clubs such as the Gay Straight Alliance, "Names Can Really Hurt Us" program, and the Unified Sports program promote inclusion and celebration of student diversity. Some teachers desire to volunteer their time in after-school supervisory roles based on generated student interest. The self-study references a variety of committees addressing curriculum, assessment, and instructional practices as well as the social and cultural need of the students. Curriculum liaisons have the opportunity to exercise teacher leadership through the execution of their departmental duties. Interviews with the liaisons illustrate a direct link between their leadership to the curriculum revision process, professional development planning, and in some cases observations of departmental instructional practices with a focus on improvement. Because teachers exercise initiative and leadership, students experience

increased engagement in learning opportunities. (self-study, teacher interviews, curriculum liaisons interviews)

The school board, superintendent, and principal demonstrate isolated collaborative, reflective, and constructive practices in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The administrative leadership team, comprised of the superintendent and all the school and district-wide administrators, meets every Tuesday to discuss a variety of district and school-related topics. Sample Leadership Council agendas from the past three years detail conversations related to budget, student recognition, evaluation and supervision, professional development, school climate, facilities, and improvement plans. The self-study reports that the principal is afforded the opportunity to add items to the agenda, comment on specific agenda items, ask questions and discuss new topics. This collaborative leadership style at the district level is also incorporated at the building level, as evidenced in both formal and informal conversations surrounding the Tolland High School Leadership Team meetings. These meetings occur weekly and are used to discuss school-related issues. The current school administrative team reports a collaborative working relationship, and teachers stated the principal consistently advocates initiatives to move the school forward. The principal attends school board meetings, as well as any school board subcommittee meetings directly impacting facets of the high school. School board meeting minutes from March, 2013 show the principal's attendance and participation for various reasons including presentation of rationale for budgetary items and recognition of high school students' achievements. Evidence gathered from conversations with building, and district-wide leadership point to the school board's usage of a different format for the 2014-2015 budget adoption process that reduced the principal's opportunity to provide input related to her monetary allocations. Formal conversations with the school board revealed limited knowledge of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations as well as their responsibility in supporting their attainment. When the school board, superintendent and principal are all collaborative, reflective and focused on attaining the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations then student learning is enhanced. (central office, school board, administrators interviews)

The self-study states that the principal serves as the administrative head of the school with the responsibility for the day-to-day operations, including the implementation of established policies and supervision of school and student activities. Updated in March, 2014, the principal's formal job description lists responsibilities in the following areas: management/school records, fiscal operations, public relations, school-physical plant, knowledge of state, federal and district laws and/or board of

education policies affecting the operation of the school, administrative leadership and practices, personnel and instruction/supervision and evaluation, professional development for maintenance and expansion of competences, and human relationships. A letter from the principal to the superintendent of schools requests a waiver with respect to the CAPT graduation standard requirement for the Class of 2014 based on changes to the state-mandated assessment program, SBAC. The superintendent of schools subsequently granted the waiver. It is important to note that since the approval of the school's self-study report, there is a significant change in the make-up of the school board, with 5 out of 9 members newly elected in November, 2013. Conversations with district and building leadership point to a current status of transition with regards to the new board members' understanding of the scope of their work and their role as a board of education member. Specific evidence gleaned from conversations with district and building administrators' referenced the school board's 2014-15 budget adoption process which eliminated the opportunity for the principal to provide a rationale for budgetary requests or advocate against possible reductions. These same conversations also referenced the school board's request to approve the school's Standardized Testing schedule; a time structure that the principal had never needed this level of approval to implement. When the school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school, building-based decisions can be made in a timely, efficient, and proactive manner. (self-study, district administrators interviews, school board, building administrators interviews)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The focus on core values and beliefs which supports a safe, positive, and respectful school climate
2. The school's fostering of heterogeneity and plans to increase opportunities for heterogeneous core courses
3. The teachers who care for students and are available to support students in multiple settings
4. The principal who has the support of the teachers, parents, and superintendent and who promotes a climate of open and honest communication
5. The advisory program which is regularly planned to address core values and beliefs and which allows for revision of lessons based on teacher feedback
6. The multiple leadership opportunities for students

7. The school leader's use of research-based evaluation and supervision process that focuses on students' learning and teachers' growth and development
8. The collaborative and reflective leadership of the principal

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Provide adequate and appropriate formal opportunities for teachers' professional development in curriculum, instruction, and assessment for the purpose of improved student learning
2. Ensure the dedicated formal time, outside of instruction time, is used to develop and apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained from professional development to improve student learning
3. Ensure the organization of scheduled time includes appropriate opportunities for professional collaboration and supports researched-based instruction
4. Ensure student load and class size is equitable and enables teachers to meet the individual learning needs of students
5. Provide formal opportunities for teachers to show leadership and to have input into school policies and procedures



## Support Standard

### 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

## **SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Tolland High School has a variety of timely, coordinated, and direct 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations are relatively new at Tolland High School, and aligning the intervention strategies to them is a work in progress. However, there are many supports in place for students who are identified as "at-risk." Tolland High School's Student Intervention Team meets weekly to discuss students who were referred to them by teachers and administrators. The team consists of the school counseling staff, school nurse, administrators, school psychologist, social worker, and special education personnel. This team looks at ways to help students be successful within the classroom. The team follows up with student progress to make sure that the interventions are solving the issues brought to its attention. Further, this team may refer the students to in-house or community services as needed. Tolland High School also has an advisory system during which students meet twice a month as a way of providing students with another adult to whom they can relate to. The Tolland Alternative Learning Center (TALC) caters to students for whom the traditional day program is no longer serving their needs. According to the Endicott survey, 86 percent of school staff and 53 percent of parents agree that the school has timely and coordinated strategies to meet the needs of all students. The programs and support offered by THS to identify at-risk students and to address their needs enhances each student's opportunity to achieve the learning expectations. (students, parents, teacher interviews, self-study, Endicott survey)

The school provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services. Prior to the start of the school year, all households receive a welcome back newsletter. The mailing contains essential school year information about school-wide programs and initiatives, including, but not limited to student support services, the school's website, and the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program. Parents of incoming freshmen are invited to attend a fall program to orient them to communication avenues and strategies within the school. Students all receive a student/parent handbook (digital version on school's website) which includes information on health and support services. The health office provides written information to families regarding state-mandated screenings and acts as a liaison for students, families, and school staff for any medical-related issues affecting students. To foster access on a 24/7 basis, the school's website provides links to the

school social worker, school psychologist, health office, counseling, and special education. Information regarding services provided by the state can be accessed on these pages as well. The referral process for students covered under special education and 504 plans is streamlined in a concise plan that includes documentation given to families to assist them through completing the process. The Student Intervention Team (SIT) is responsible for communicating with families about all actions (conferences, strategies, etc.) in practice for each student. Mandated yearly plan reviews keep families and students current and engaged. Additional information regarding outside agencies to assist families in need is provided if appropriate. The dedicated and consistent approach to communicating important information to families ensures that students and parents understand and are aware of available resources to support student achievement of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (school website, department meetings, parents, teacher interviews, Endicott survey)

Support services staff use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student. School counselors utilize Family Connection/Naviance to provide parents and students with college and career planning via the Internet. This allows for individualized access as well as collaborative discussions with parents, students and counselors regarding areas such as the state-driven initiative Student Success Plans (SSPs) and college and career planning. Family Connection is used to implement Student Success Plans and allows students and their parents to access a wide variety of career and college information. Beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, the eDocs program through Naviance allowed counselors to send transcripts and recommendations electronically to colleges. Counselors also use Naviance to send emails to students and/or parents. The library media center (LMC) houses computers for independent student use and is adjacent to a computer lab that is used by classes. E-readers and downloadable books for personal devices are accessible through the media center along with applicable technology support. The media center's website highlights the online services available throughout the school. Included in these services are Follet *Destiny*, the catalog of THS library resource; SIRS Researcher; and a link to iCONN, a research database provided by the Connecticut State Library and local libraries. PowerSchool, a web-based student information system, allows all school staff to access information about students as well as to schedule course requests. Health services use School Nurse Assessment Program (SNAP), a digital data base of student medical records. Additionally, the health office is responsible for updating the student health information in SNAP for access school-wide. Special education staff have access to PowerSchool and IEP Direct, a web-based special education management program. Each of the special education classrooms has two computers for student use. Assistive technologies available for special education students with specific needs include Alpha Smarts,

portable word-processing keyboards; Dragon, speech-recognition software; Kurzweil, scan and read software that makes printed or electronic text accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired; a Braille device; and frequency modulation (FM) listening devices. Support services use technology effectively and efficiently to deliver a broad and effective range of services for each student. (self-study, teacher interviews, school resource committee)

School counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who deliver a written, developmental program and meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling. Four school counselors serve approximately 900 students at Tolland High School. The director of school counseling has a student load of approximately half that of the other three counselors, who each serve approximately 260 students. In addition to the school counselors, the school also has a full-time school psychologist. A full-time school social worker is assigned to the building, but the director of pupil services may reassign this person to another school in the district if the need arises. A yearly timeline and a list of topics covered in a given academic year is in place; however, there are no lesson plans included in the curriculum provided to the committee.

Discussions with guidance staff, parents, and students indicate that there are several large group, small group, and individual meetings with counselors each year of a student's high school experience. One example of this is during the freshman year: students have a whole-class assembly during which they are given information about Family Connection and PowerSchool. Students then see their school counselor in small groups during the first two weeks of school followed by an individual meeting at the end of first quarter to discuss any transition issues. Further, if the counselor sees a need, students may meet with their counselor upon review of their course selection. Even with the agreement of students, parents, and counselors, the results of the Endicott survey indicate that only 20 percent of students feel that they meet with their school counselor regularly. All members of school counseling services are also involved in the referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers. A representative from the counseling staff meets with the Local Prevention Council as requested. As necessary, school personnel seek the assistance of Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services (EMPS) through the State of Connecticut 2-1-1 service. EMPS personnel come to the school to assist students and parents and plan appropriate follow-up care. School personnel also make referrals to Department of Children and Families (DCF) as mandated by state law. School counselors also make referrals to Community Health Resources and outside therapists. Even though students have been surveyed about counseling services, there has been minimal use of assessment data. While the school counseling services personnel believe they are receptive to suggestions and ideas for improvements, they do not have a system to collect

regular feedback from students, parents, and teachers to evaluate and improve their programs. Surveys collected from all seniors have been useful, but there is no survey for students in grades nine to eleven or for parents. School counselors would like to use the survey capabilities of Naviance to accomplish this task, but the lack of technology support and training has made this difficult. Further, school counseling staff only reported one change made as a result of the senior survey. They began meeting with seniors more often, resulting in face-to-face visits with the seniors about four times in the fall. Evaluations are given at the end of parent programs with results used to make appropriate changes. For example, parents indicated that holding the college planning program in the fall would be more beneficial than in late winter, so the program was moved to November. Currently, school counselors do not survey parents of students in grades nine through eleven. Because the school has adequate certified guidance personnel who deliver a written curriculum and engage students in individual and group meetings as well as provide outreach and referral service much of the student needs are met. When additional feedback is solicited and used to improve guidance services then each student will be ensured of opportunities to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (counseling staff, students, parents, self-study)

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. Tolland High School is staffed by one full-time registered nurse (RN) and one part-time licensed practical nurse (LPN) to meet the needs of its approximately 900 students and 100 staff members. The district's nursing coordinator is the full-time nurse who works at Tolland Middle School. The nursing staff documents visits from 100 students per day. The full-time nurse creates individual health care plans for any students with a medical issue that may impact their academic performance. Each year approximately 50 health care plans are created for chronic conditions and 50 for acute injuries and concussions. Additionally, verifying the students with allergies is done for any class in which food is prepared or served. The nurse responds to all medical emergencies in the building. The school staff may contact the nurse by phone or walkie-talkie in case of an emergency. The nurses respond to a student at the site of injury or illness and make the determination if the student can be treated at school or requires treatment in an emergency room. The nursing staff is responsible for the medical clearance of all Tolland High School athletes. All athletic medical paperwork is turned in to the nurse, who checks for medical conditions, allergies, medications needed, injuries or concussions, and an up-to-date physical examination. Spreadsheets are then created for each coach with information on each of their players and are collated with parent permission slips. When needed, the nurse will contact the parent/guardian to make needed outside referrals. The nurse also consults with the district nursing coordinator or medical consultant. Referrals and reports are made

to outside health agencies. Although the nursing staff does not use formal assessment data to improve nursing services, they do review the patterns of visits to the health office, referrals and other available information. This tracking has resulted in an additional private space to meet with students. The school's health care program includes both direct and preventative care in an environment that offers a full complement of services which supports students as they strive to achieve their learning goals. (self-study, school nurse, Student Intervention Team)

The library/media services program is minimally integrated into the school's curriculum and instructional program and has an adequate number of certified personnel, but lacks any support staff. The library/media staff consists of a single full-time library/media specialist (LMS). Without a support staff this minimally meets current student and staff needs. The LMS, in collaboration with the English teachers, familiarizes freshmen to the layout and offerings of the school library media center (LMC) as well as provides an introduction to research basics. Additionally, the LMS states she has gone out to other departments, such as, science, art, and social studies and collaborated to provide instruction and support to those teachers and students. However, there is not a clear plan for outreach to those in the school who are the target audience for using the materials. While there appears to be an adequate number of books and magazines, the library collection needs to be weeded and tailored to the ongoing needs of the students and faculty. Online research tools are not being utilized to their potential, primarily due to the lack of consistent integration with the services of the LMS. Although there is a consistent use of the computer lab and independent computers housed in the LMC, the LMS effectiveness is hampered by the lack of support staff. To the credit of the LMS, however, a grant has been acquired which enabled the acquisition of E-Readers that students may borrow. Students or staff with their own devices may download both audio and e-books. Currently, the library/media services programs are limited in its responsiveness to students' interest and needs in order to support independent learning. This is evident in the lack of a stand-alone catalog look-up station. A student lacking availability to a computer or a piece of technology with access to the Internet must approach the LMS and ask for help without any expectation of privacy. While this may be an avenue of collaboration and exploration for both student and teacher, it does not foster a spirit of life-long learning. Additionally, the absence of study halls provides a narrow window, approximately 15 minutes before the start of school and approximately 75 minutes after school for independent use of the library. There is no embedded time in any class curriculum to visit the LMC on a weekly, quarterly, or even monthly basis to explore independently materials and resources available to students. When the library/media center has appropriate resources and personnel it will become a resource that can be more effectively integrated into curriculum and

instructional practices and better meet students' learning and teachers' instructional needs. (self-study, teacher interviews, parents, students, support services committee)

The support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners, have an inadequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff. Currently, special education staff consists of three full-time and two half-time special education teachers, eight paraprofessionals, and one part-time secretary. In addition, the school has one part-time speech/language pathologist who is shared by the district, as are the services of the district assistive technology specialist and physical and occupational therapists. The district Director of Pupil Services is responsible for special education personnel in addition to serving as the case manager for all students placed out of district. The district Director of Curriculum and Instruction oversees English language learning in the district. Special education staff are included in the Student Intervention Team meetings and they also communicate with teachers through the IEP referral and review process. All special education teachers co-teach with a core content area teacher to provide specialized instruction. Due to the number of students needing assistance, paraprofessionals are often assigned to two classes during a block, splitting their time between the two classrooms. Even with all of the above supports, parents responses in the Endicott survey indicated that only 33 percent of parents believe that there is adequate number of certified or licensed personnel to serve the special education population. According to the Endicott survey, only 39 percent of staff is in agreement that support services personnel use assessment data, including feedback from teachers, to improve services. When all the support services are in place for identified students, the school will ensure equity in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (support services committee, parents, self-study, Endicott survey)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The timely, coordinated and directive counseling and nursing strategies for all students
2. The coordinated Student Intervention Team aimed specifically at students who are at-risk and for families who are most in need
3. The information regarding support services is readily available and provided to all families
4. The effective use of technology to deliver a range of coordinated services for each student
5. The TALC program for students who need an alternative to the traditional day program



## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure the written developmental school counseling program includes connections to the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
2. Ensure all components of the school's counseling program are equitably provided to students in every grade
3. Develop and implement a plan to ensure adequate personnel and resources are present to appropriately integrate library/media services into curriculum and instructional practices, to ensure there are adequate materials and technologies to support the curriculum, that LMC is responsive to students' independent learning needs, and uses feedback from the school community to improve services
4. Review and address the feedback from the school community to improve student support services for identified students and ensure an appropriate level of collaborative, targeted services for equitable and inclusive learning opportunities exist for all students in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
5. Develop and implement processes to regularly obtain feedback from the school community to improve each specific area of the school's support services

## Support Standard



### Community Resources for Learning

*The achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

## **COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**

### **CONCLUSION**

The community and the district's governing body provide partial funding for a wide range of programs that are supplemented by student fees, community organizations, and business donations. While technology is a stated priority of the stakeholders, budgetary restrictions prohibit the implementation of a full range of technology supports. The district itself does not provide sufficient funding for the range of school programs currently offered, and many of the additional classroom and athletic materials are provided through family support and/or fundraising and donation. While there have been some minimal increases in the overall budget for the past three years, these increases have not covered fixed cost increases. Tolland High School appears to have minimally sufficient professional staffing; however, the number of support staff does not meet the school's needs in some areas. The special education paraprofessionals are split between classes and regular education paraprofessionals are used as hall, lunch, and ISS monitors; and the LMC has no support at all. Staffing reductions occur due to budget constraints yet this has not directly impacted the wide range of programs offered, but may have increased class sizes. There is a wide consensus among parents and school board members that teachers are able to continue programs and services through a variety of creative ways, despite the lack of funding. Teachers reported that much professional development time in the last two years was spent on NEASC preparation and other state-mandated initiatives. Teachers reported not having sufficient time to collaborate with each other because of curriculum writing during the professional learning community (PLC) meetings. The professional development budget has increased over the past four years, but because of prioritization of some initiatives and time constraints, departments did not always receive the funds they requested. Technology is a major concern of all stakeholders. Teachers, students, and parents all report issues with technology which cause a loss of instructional time. Courses such as drafting and graphics that require technology are given priority, but the staff report a lack of updates to software outside of those programs. Half of the teachers received new computers in the summer before the 2013-2014 school year. The other half are expected to receive new computers this coming summer. The school board has made technology a top priority, but stated that it would fund full-time kindergarten and a school resource officer first. Funding for sufficient equipment and materials in some areas is not adequate. In order to assure that AP Psychology books were ordered, social studies teachers waived their material allocation funds. Available funds from the current budgets are sometimes frozen during the school year. Departments that have not immediately spent their funds are then no longer able to purchase equipment. Certain departments state that they are not able to purchase adequate instructional

materials and supplies. Teachers and/or students purchase materials out of pocket in several departments. Until the community and the district governing body sufficiently supports the delivery of curriculum, instruction, programs, and services, student learning and achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations will not be ensured. (self-study, teachers, school board, panel presentation, administrators, facility tour, classroom observations)

Tolland High School funds programs to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant and to keep the school clean on a daily basis; however, it does not consistently develop plans to properly maintain, catalogue and replace equipment. Although the building is fairly new, recurring maintenance and repairs need to be addressed as they arise. There is a repair and maintenance reporting system in place as well as a system for rotating the cleaning tasks among the custodial team. The principal has put a checklist in place for tracking the effectiveness of cleaning as there appears to be staffing issues related to custodial absenteeism. She also meets with the head custodian regularly. Students and parents report that the facility is clean, including showers and locker rooms, although some teachers report that their classrooms are not cleaned regularly. Since the school's self-study was written, one full-time evening custodian was reduced from the budget. Evidence from the school's maintenance reporting system, School Dude, shows that the school does a fair job of handling the work orders. Funding for building maintenance is taken from the maintenance budget, but unforeseen repairs are also taken out of this budget, which impacts other elements of the budget. While equipment maintenance and replacement is generally budgeted, funds are not always used for these ends because other costs take precedence after the budget is approved. Not all equipment undergoes regular maintenance. Rather than being a planned budget expense, the repainting of the parking lot was paid for out of the students' parking lot fees. The school maintains an acceptable level of cleanliness and provides maintenance as necessary. When a systematic plan to handle replacements, maintenance, or repairs is in place then building maintenance will be ensured. (self-study, teachers, school board, administrators, facility tour, classroom observations)

The community funds and the school implements several long-range plans that address programs and services, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements; however, plans for anticipated enrollment changes and staffing needs are currently in the planning/discussion phases during the 2013-2014 year, and long-term funding plans are not identified. The district strategic plan addresses programs and services, technology, and facilities with the onus for implementation residing with a variety of individuals within Tolland High School, including the principal, building administrators, teachers,

curriculum liaisons, maintenance and custodial staff. This plan is reviewed continually by those responsible. The strategic plan does not detail or specify projected funding. The Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan details capital improvements/facilities as well as funding costs and annual budget amounts for those items through 2017-2018. Currently, plans for enrollment changes and staffing needs are being discussed through the School Facility Utilization and Safety Study. Technology is part of the district strategic plan and is further detailed in the technology five-year plan, which goes through 2014-2015; however, there is no long-range budget plan for technology included in either the strategic plan or the technology plan. When the school district completes a long range plan which includes plans for anticipated enrollment changes and staffing needs and the community commits the funds to effect this plan then the school will better meet the learning needs of all students. (self-study, panel presentation, community resources committee, central office)

The budget development process for Tolland Public Schools actively involves faculty and building administrators in the development and implementation of the budget. Curriculum liaisons are responsible for submitting a budget for their departments at the beginning of the school year. The budget is submitted to the principal and then to the superintendent. Necessary changes are then made by curriculum liaisons in conjunction with their departments. Some departments indicated that although the budget process is inclusionary and involves the stakeholders, the budget rarely passes at first referendum. When the budget does pass, funds originally requested by departments have been cut or significantly diminished. Departments report that instructional materials are not adequately renewed, and there is a lack of confidence that the materials requested will be received. In addition, the budget is often frozen during the school year so that planned purchases are not always made. Funds that are then in surplus at the end of the year are reallocated to the most pressing needs rather than used for their original intent. Five out of nine members of the school board were newly elected in November 2013. Their stated goal is to make a budget process that encourages town members to be more actively involved and participate in the vote. The requested increase in the board-approved budget is 3.44 percent for the 2014-2015 school year. While faculty and building administrators are actively involved in developing the school's budget, the impact of their involvement is minimized because of the number of factors influencing the budget process. (school board, panel presentation, self-study, teachers, administration)

The school site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services. The school site and plant adequately and appropriately provide space to ensure implementation of educational

programs. The school facility was built in 2006 and no serious inadequacies were observed with the school site and plant. Each teacher has his/her own classroom, and most core departments, outside of the social studies and English departments, have a computer lab large enough to fit most classes. The library media center has a large space to host classes at tables, in a computer lab, or on 20 stand-alone computers. Individual teacher classrooms have shelving for storage space, furniture, and other classroom equipment that is in good condition. Science classrooms have equipment for student labs and safety equipment. Social studies classrooms have maps pertaining to the subject matter (historical and geographical). The world languages department has a language laboratory. The auditorium has state-of-the-art equipment, although a budget for ensuring its replacement or repair is not in place. The cafeteria is sufficient in size and adequately equipped to serve four lunch waves. The administrative, counseling, and other student support service offices, as well as the conference rooms that are housed around them, are adequate and suitable for confidentiality. Parents and students expressed satisfaction with the facilities. As a result of the adequate and appropriate space at THS, students are supported as they work to achieve the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (facility tour, classroom observation, panel presentation, parents, students)

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. Since the report was written by the school, a new fire marshal implemented a more collaborative approach to the fire inspection process, completing a walk-through with the principal. This walk-through allows minor problems to be quickly addressed. The school follows all procedures concerning chemicals and other hazardous materials. In the art room, there is a designated area for using spray paint; in the wood shop and science departments, there are designated cases for storing chemicals. Additional safety precautions are in place and respected in both departments such as the use of protective goggles in wood shop and the emergency gas valve in the science department. While there are some issues with achieving a constant temperature, the site is new and the overall air quality and ventilation are adequate, providing a comfortable physical climate. The building is completely handicap accessible. Safety is a primary concern, with any maintenance requests that address safety taking precedence, as documented by the maintenance and repair requests. Federal funds were allocated to the high school, which will be used to add two security cameras to high volume areas and a buzzer entry system. Students and families indicated satisfaction with the safety of the building. Because the school maintains documentation, complies with applicable federal and state laws, and complies with local fire, health and safety

regulations the community is ensured of a safe facility for learning. (facility tour, support staff, parents, students, self-study, administration)

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. The professional staff adequately engages parents and families in each student's education and offers supports to those less connected to the school. Electronic communication from administrators, counselors, and teachers is used in the form of emails, PowerSchool bulletins, Naviance, and the Tolland High School website. Letters mailed home, phone calls, and the community newsletter also provide information to families who have less technology available to them. Counselors and administrators hold meetings at convenient times for parents such as before school, during lunchtimes (so that phone conferencing can be used), and at night. Both from the self-survey and parent discussions, the majority of parents reported feeling Tolland High School actively engages parents in their students' education. Multiple opportunities are offered for parents to be involved with the school community through parent programs and the Community Advisory Council. The consistent efforts by THS to engage students' parents demonstrate the school's high regard for home-school collaboration which enhances the students' opportunities for success. (self-study, teachers, support staff, parents, panel presentation, administration)

Tolland High School effectively develops productive parent, business/community/and higher education partnerships that support student learning. The school has a number of partnerships that promote student learning. Students can enroll in AP courses, receive UCONN credit for a variety of ECE classes, take courses at Manchester Community College (MCC) for credit and earn credit through MCC for family and consumer sciences, math, and business, science and English on the high school campus. Students attend a number of alternative programs such as the Tolland Alternative Learning Center, Vernon Regional Adult Basic Education, Rockville High School Summer School, CREC Polaris-Lincoln Academy, Atlas Program, and the Grace Webb School through the Institute of Living. Many clubs and organizations support Tolland High School, such as the Tolland High School Booster Club, the Tolland Educational Foundation (TEF), the Tolland Athletic Foundation, Project Graduation, the Tolland High School Scholarship Fund, and entrepreneurial ventures. Many local businesses sponsor club events involving Tolland High School students. Parents are actively involved in school events. Programs such as "Names Can Really Hurt Us" and VOICES foster a sense of community and an awareness of issues related to teens. Lastly, Tolland High School has established strong working relationships with a variety of health and human service organizations. Because the school develops productive parent, community,

business, and higher education partnerships opportunities for student learning are increased. (self-study, teachers, support staff, parents, panel presentation).

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The excellent school facility that supports student learning
2. The community, including parents, businesses, programs, colleges, and others that work in collaboration with Tolland High School to support learning
3. The frequent communication with parents and families
4. The teachers who find creative ways to fund programs
5. The study identified to determine long-range planning for facility use

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Increase available technology and technology support to sufficiently provide for the implementation of the curriculum and appropriately support 21<sup>st</sup> century instruction to ensure student learning and achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
2. Provide dependable funding to ensure a wide range of school programs, sufficient support staff, ongoing professional development, a full range of technology support and sufficient instructional materials and supplies
3. Ensure active faculty and administrative involvement in the budgetary development and implementation process is meaningful
4. Develop and implement a long-range plan to address funding for technology, programs and services, maintenance, replacement, and repair
5. Develop a long-range plan addressing enrollment changes and staffing needs



## 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 Tolland High School. The faculty, school board, and superintendent should be apprised by the building administration yearly of progress made addressing visiting committee recommendations.

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

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

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

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

The visiting committee would like to express its appreciation to the students, faculty, staff, and school officials for the warm welcome and genuine hospitality extended throughout the accreditation visit.

**Tolland High School  
NEASC Accreditation Visit  
March 23—26, 2014**

**Visiting Committee**

<p>Donald W. Gates, Chair Coginchaug Regional High School Durham, CT 06422</p> <p>Marilyn Tencza Leicester Public Schools Leicester, MA 01524</p> <p>Marc Balanda New Milford High School New Milford, CT 06776</p> <p>Paula Brault Pioneer Valley Regional School Northfield, MA 01360</p> <p>Leslie Corey Nathan Hale-Ray High School Moodus, CT 06469</p> <p>Heidi Edel Shepaug Valley High School Washington, CT 06793</p> <p>Kirsten Hardy Newtown High School Sandy Hook, CT 06482</p> <p>Penny Hebert Tourtellotte Memorial High School North Grosvenordale, CT 06255</p>	<p>Joelle Kilcourse Woodland Regional High School Beacon Falls, CT 06403</p> <p>Janet Mancuso-Rucker Kearsarge Regional High School North Sutton, NH 03260</p> <p>Julie McNamee Staples High School Westport, CT 06880</p> <p>Pamela Rose Farmington High School Farmington, CT 06034</p> <p>Tiffany Russo Stamford High School Stamford, CT 06902</p> <p>Beth Skudzienski Ridgefield High School Ridgefield, CT 06877</p> <p>Cathy Sosnowski Torrington Public Schools Torrington, CT 06790</p> <p>Kelly Watrous Mark T. Sheehan High School Wallingford, CT 06492</p>
--	---

# NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

## Committee on Public Secondary Schools

### SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

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

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

## **COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. CORE VALUES, BELIEFS, AND LEARNING EXPECTATIONS**

#### **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The considerable work in creating school-wide rubrics
2. The initial implementation by some Tolland High School teachers of the newly revised school-wide rubrics in classrooms for various assignments
3. The creation of the advisory program with connections to core values
4. The tremendous amount of school “pride” that is evident in speaking with faculty, staff, students and parents
5. The use of rubrics in developing and implementing Student Learning Objectives in some teacher evaluations
6. Programs like the new Student Senate, VOICES, and “Names Can Really Hurt Us” that allow for increased student engagement and experiential education in important core values

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Ensure all school-wide analytic rubrics indicate the targeted high level of achievement
2. Develop and implement a process to ensure the school’s core values, beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations drive curriculum, instruction and assessment in every classroom
3. Develop and implement a process to ensure the school’s core values, beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations guide the school’s policies, procedures, decisions and resource allocations
4. Develop a formal schedule, which includes the school community in a collaborative process, to review and revise the school’s core values beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources as well as school and district priorities

## **2. CURRICULUM**

### **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The building leadership support for curriculum work
2. The teachers who seek out cross-curricular opportunities
3. The funding for curriculum leadership positions
4. The explicit instruction provided to students on the ethical use of technology

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Embed 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations in all applicable course curricula
2. Implement a process, including a time line for completion, for all curriculum to be written in the school's common format which 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 analytic and course specific rubrics
3. Develop and implement a process that ensures all curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding, inquiry, problem solving, higher order thinking, cross disciplinary learning authentic learning, and informed and ethical use of technology
4. Develop and implement a plan to ensure effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation exists between and among all academic areas in the school as well as with sending schools in the district
5. Ensure alignment between written and taught curriculum in all subjects
6. Develop a process to ensure the district provides the school's professional staff with sufficient formal time and financial resources for the ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum based on assessment results and current research.

### **3. INSTRUCTION**

#### **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The core values and beliefs are present in a variety of instructional activities
2. The core values and beliefs are evident in teachers' commitment to providing extra help to students who need additional learning time
3. The daily late bus to support student learning beyond the school day
4. The rich elective course offerings provide opportunities for authentic, real-world learning activities and projects
5. The various samples of student work that are displayed throughout the building
6. Many teachers at Tolland High School are committed to remaining well-informed in their content areas
7. Teachers seek out professional development opportunities to access best teaching practices

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Incorporate school-wide professional development training in differentiated instruction, co-teaching, and the use of formative assessments for effective instruction for students at all levels
2. Integrate special education teachers into content area PLCs
3. Increase the use of student assessment data to plan, design, and inform instruction
4. Increase opportunities for students to engage in cross-disciplinary learning
5. Develop and implement a process to ensure all students are engaged in inquiry, problem-solving and higher order thinking
6. Develop and implement a plan to integrate appropriate technology into instructional practices

## **4. ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT LEARNING**

### **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The emphasis in the career and technical education areas to use active learning strategies and authentic assessment
2. The common practice of communicating unit specific goals to students prior to each unit of study
3. The use of common assessments in several course areas
4. The regular use of formative assessments
5. The timely feedback on summative assessments

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Fully implement the school's formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills
2. Develop and implement a process to aggregate individual student results based on the school-wide use of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century analytic rubrics
3. Develop and implement a process to communicate individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to students and their families
4. Develop and implement a process to determine the school's progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and communicate that progress to the school community
5. Ensure professional staff collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement
6. Implement a process to ensure all teachers regularly use formative assessments to inform and adapt their instructional practices for improved student learning
7. Ensure teachers and administrators examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice
8. Review and revise grading and reporting practices to align with the school's core values and beliefs about learning

## **5. SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP**

### **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The focus on core values and beliefs which supports a safe, positive, and respectful school climate
2. The school's fostering of heterogeneity and plans to increase opportunities for heterogeneous core courses
3. The teachers who care for students and are available to support students in multiple settings
4. The principal who has the support of the teachers, parents, and superintendent and who promotes a climate of open and honest communication
5. The advisory program which is regularly planned to address core values and beliefs and which allows for revision of lessons based on teacher feedback
6. The multiple leadership opportunities for students
7. The school leader's use of research-based evaluation and supervision process that focuses on students' learning and teachers' growth and development
8. The collaborative and reflective leadership of the principal

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Provide adequate and appropriate formal opportunities for teachers' professional development in curriculum, instruction, and assessment for the purpose of improved student learning
2. Ensure the dedicated formal time, outside of instruction time, is used to develop and apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained from professional development to improve student learning
3. Ensure the organization of scheduled time includes appropriate opportunities for professional collaboration and supports researched-based instruction
4. Ensure student load and class size is equitable and enables teachers to meet the individual learning needs of students
5. Provide formal opportunities for teachers to show leadership and to have input into school policies and procedures



## **6. SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**

### **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The timely, coordinated and directive counseling and nursing strategies for all students
2. The coordinated Student Intervention Team aimed specifically at students who are at-risk and for families who are most in need
3. The information regarding support services is readily available and provided to all families
4. The effective use of technology to deliver a range of coordinated services for each student
5. The TALC program for students who need an alternative to the traditional day program

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Ensure the written developmental school counseling program includes connections to the 21<sup>st</sup> century and school learning expectations
2. Ensure all components of the school's counseling program are equitably provided to students in every grade
3. Develop and implement a plan to ensure adequate personnel and resources are present to appropriately integrate library/media services into curriculum and instructional practices, to ensure there are adequate materials and technologies to support the curriculum, that LMC is responsive to students' independent learning needs, and uses feedback from the school community to improve services
4. Review and address the feedback from the school community to improve student support services for identified students and ensure an appropriate level of collaborative, targeted services for equitable and inclusive learning opportunities exist for all students in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
5. Develop and implement processes to regularly obtain feedback from the school community to improve each specific area of the school's support services

## **7. COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**

### **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The excellent school facility that supports student learning
2. The community, including parents, businesses, programs, colleges, and others that work in collaboration with Tolland High School to support learning
3. The frequent communication with parents and families
4. The teachers who find creative ways to fund programs
5. The study identified to determine long-range planning for facility use

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Increase available technology and technology support to sufficiently provide for the implementation of the curriculum and appropriately support 21<sup>st</sup> century instruction to ensure student learning and achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
2. Provide dependable funding to ensure a wide range of school programs, sufficient support staff, ongoing professional development, a full range of technology support and sufficient instructional materials and supplies
3. Ensure active faculty and administrative involvement in the budgetary development and implementation process is meaningful
4. Develop and implement a long-range plan to address funding for technology, programs and services, maintenance, replacement, and repair
5. Develop a long-range plan addressing enrollment changes and staffing needs