

**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

**COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

***REPORT OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE***

**NATHAN HALE – RAY HIGH SCHOOL  
MOODUS, CONNECTICUT**

OCTOBER 1 - 4, 2006

David A. Sweet, CHAIR  
Dr. Allen Fossbender, ASSISTANT CHAIR  
Linda Dadona, PRINCIPAL

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
Statement on Limitations.....	3
Introduction.....	3
Overview of Findings.....	6
Quality of Self-Assessment	
Discussion of Significant Findings regarding	
Teaching and Learning and the Support of	
Teaching and Learning	
School and Community Profile.....	10
School’s Statement of Mission and Learning Expectations .....	16
Header Page: Teaching and Learning Standards.....	19
Mission and Expectations.....	20
Curriculum.....	25
Instruction.....	33
Assessment of Student Learning.....	39
Header Page: Support of Teaching and Learning Standards .....	45
Leadership and Organization .....	46
School Resources for Learning.....	53
Community Resources for Learning.....	61
Follow-Up Responsibilities.....	66

## APPENDICES

1. Roster of Team Members .....	68
2. Commission Policy on Substantive Change .....	69

# STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS

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

The Commission on Public Secondary Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges considers this visiting committee report of Nathan Hale - Ray High School to be a privileged document submitted by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges to the principal of the school and by the principal to the state department of education. Distribution of the report within the school community is the responsibility of the school principal. The final visiting committee report must be released in its entirety within sixty (60) days 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 Nathan Hale - Ray High School in terms of the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. Neither the total report nor any of its subsections is to be considered an evaluation of any individual staff member but rather a professional appraisal of the school as it appeared to the visiting team.

### INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

- Teaching and Learning Standards
  - Mission and Expectations for Student Learning
  - Curriculum
  - Instruction
  - Assessment of Student Learning

- Support of Teaching and Learning Standards
  - Leadership and Organization
  - School Resources for Learning
  - Community Resources for Learning.

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

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

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At Nathan Hale - Ray High School, a committee of 10 members, including the principal and assistant 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 a limited involvement from students, parents, and other members of the school community.

The self-study of Nathan Hale – Ray High School extended over a period of 20 school months from October 2004 to October 2006. The visiting committee was pleased to note that some students, parents, and other members of the school community joined the professional staff in the self-study deliberations for meaningful input.

Public schools evaluated by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools must complete appropriate materials to assess their adherence to the Standards for Accreditation and the quality of their educational offerings in light of the school's mission, learning expectations, and unique student population. In addition to using the Self-Study Guides developed by a representative group of New England educators and approved by the Commission, Nathan Hale – Ray High School also used questionnaires developed by The Global Institute at Endicott College to reflect the concepts contained in the Standards for Accreditation. These materials provided discussion items for a comprehensive assessment of the school by the professional staff during the self-study.

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

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

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

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 40 hours shadowing 16 students for a half day
- a total of 14 hours of classroom observation (in addition to time shadowing students)
- numerous informal observations in and around the school
- tours of the facility
- individual meetings with 32 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and the assessment of student learning
- group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers
- the examination of student work including a selection of work collected by the school

Each conclusion on the report was agreed to by team 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 team's judgment will be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning and to better meet Commission Standards.

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

## **OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS**

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

The quality of the Nathan Hale-Ray High School Self-Study was excellent. In each Standard area, the school community candidly evaluated each of the focal concerns in terms of the quality indicators. In the process, strengths and needs were identified, and some planned and continuous improvements are already underway.

### **Teaching and Learning at Nathan Hale-Ray High School**

#### **Mission and Expectations for Student Learning**

Nathan Hale-Ray High School developed a mission statement and expectations that reflects the values and expectations of the community. This mission and the expectations were clearly integrated into the culture of the school. A significant effort was made to include a wide variety of stakeholders in meaningful ways as the mission and expectations document was developed.

However, a formalized process to evaluate the mission statement's impact on instruction, curriculum, and assessment on a regular basis has not been adopted. Effort is also needed to align all departmental and individual rubrics with the school-wide rubrics.

#### **Curriculum**

In the area of curriculum, the efforts by the faculty and administration to provide a variety of academic options for students in a school of this size was particularly notable. The open enrollment practices that allow more students to choose and experience elevated levels of challenge and success are not often found in more traditional schools where tracking and prerequisites limit student opportunity. The close connections in the curricula to the mission and learning expectation are also notable. These two factors combined with the personalized nature of all aspects of the Hale-Ray experience, enhance the delivery of curriculum.

The need for scheduled, formal, and on-going collaboration among teachers to discuss student work, collect data, revise curricula, and improve instruction was recognized by the school as a missing component. Time use should be examined to maximize opportunities for collaboration and for the delivery of effective instruction. In order to optimize available time for instruction and the implementation of curricula, the effects of X-Block and the simultaneous scheduling of academic seminar must be analyzed to determine their effectiveness. These two factors may be limiting the scheduling options for improving the offerings to students.

#### **Instruction**

The dedicated faculty and staff must be commended for their efforts and commitment. There is a real sense of community and family in the school on the part of the teachers, the

students, and the administrators. A high level of rapport among all stakeholders in the school is easily observed. Students are engaged in learning and there are many opportunities for student self-assessment built into the teaching practices at Hale-Ray including the portfolio and classroom-based self-assessments. The opportunities for authentic application of skills and knowledge in the Hale-Ray program also enriches the student's learning experiences.

There are several areas where there are possibilities to improve instruction. Formalized "in-house" professional development opportunities should be provided to focus on sharing some of the innovative instructional practices that are already in place in some classrooms supporting instruction in the block. Use existing time and the obvious expertise that exists in the building to provide professional development that fosters effective collaboration, cooperation, and communication of a shared vision to improve teaching and learning. There must be a formalized process to collect and analyze important data on the effectiveness of instruction and to reflect on this feedback. This analysis will assure that there is appropriate rigor for all disciplines, at all levels, and for all students.

### **Assessment of Student Learning**

Nathan Hale-Ray High School has maintained a school culture that fosters student respect, independence, and responsibility, key components for adult success. Rubrics for student performance assessment and self-assessment are being developed and implemented across the curriculum. The use of district-wide rubrics that were collaboratively developed for science labs is particularly notable.

Improvements must be made in the area of professional development whereby scheduled and on-going collaboration will be ensured among teachers to discuss student work, revise curricula, and improve instruction. A formalized and on-going effort to examine assessment data to inform decision-making about curriculum development, assessment strategies, and instructional practices is fertile ground and must become part of the common practice. Course and task rubrics must also be aligned with the school-wide rubrics for the graduation expectations.

Teachers and students repeatedly acknowledge that there is a need to examine the rationale for and to improve the procedures for the portfolio program. Both teachers and students express a need for the utility of this program to be developed so that its importance to student learning can be clarified.

## **Support of Teaching and Learning at Nathan Hale-Ray**

### **Leadership and Organization**

Although many positive references about leadership and organization appear throughout the report, several characteristics are noteworthy. The caring, nurturing, and dedicated administration, faculty, and staff are the heartbeat of this school. The parents and community representatives interviewed appreciate the school pride that is present in the community and the students' academic and social growth that is the result of their experiences at Hale-Ray.

The principal's commitment and passion for this school and how her spirit and commitment have continued to promote the initiatives we have observed here at Hale-Ray are the foundation for excellence at this school. The faculty's level of volunteerism is notable enhancing the NHRHS programs and supporting students. This faculty willingness to take on a variety of roles has had a dramatic effect on the positive learning culture in the school.

Issues to be addressed in the area of leadership are important and timely for a school that has taken on so many reform initiatives. It is necessary to be reflective about these initiatives such as block scheduling, portfolio assessment, the "Understanding by Design" planning model, and the academic seminar to determine their true effect on the learning outcomes of the students. Dig deeper into these initiatives and establish them as integral, calculated, and meaningful parts of the way business is conducted at NHRHS. Provide school-based professional development to support these initiatives using the expertise of teacher-leaders within the school. Professional development that utilizes this home-grown expertise will be very powerful and more sustainable than bringing in outside experts. Limit the focus to the current initiatives and do not add more until the current initiatives have been internalized and the faculty feels confident with the results produced for the school and the students. Sharpen this focus, collect and analyze data, and strive to make the current initiatives a success. Continue to articulate a long-term vision for the future that supports this mission and sets clearly defined goals for teaching and learning. Through these initiatives, ensure academic rigor for all students at all levels and work hard to promote an increased understanding of diversity.

### **School Resources for Learning**

The learning environment of Nathan Hale-Ray High School is extremely positive. This climate is the result of significant effort by many and a solid vision, planning, and follow-through. The foundation of this positive environment is the myriad of support services for students as they work to fulfill the expectations of the mission. The philosophy and implementation of open enrollment to many of your classes contributes greatly to this supportive environment. This belief removes the false barriers that stand in the way of student success, and research has demonstrated that if more students are allowed the opportunity to participate, more will succeed.

The need to increase access to the school's library media center before, during, and after school so that individual students can access those services to assist in their learning is a firm recommendation made as a result of this visit. The implementation and delivery of a library/media curriculum that aligns with the state frameworks will assist the students as they research and create knowledge. There is also a need to examine the delivery of support services to your students with identified needs as some improvements are warranted.

### **Community Resources For Learning**

The school has made many efforts to provide students with a safe and nurturing environment. The strong student-centered approach has fostered a culture of family and security that is rare in schools. The cleanliness of the building and absence of graffiti reflect well on the administration, staff, and students and demonstrate pride in their school. Local businesses are also proud of the school and they support solid relationships that provide financial support for

school programs and services that enhance student learning experiences and support extra and co-curricular activities.

The student population at Hale-Ray is growing, and this growth will require a plan to address the current and future space needs in the school, especially storage space. It is imperative that the increased need for storage never take away the valuable space needed for teaching and learning. Efforts must be made to ensure fiscal support to address these challenges which include, but are not limited to, providing adequate elective courses, remedial assistance, staffing, and school facilities to meet the needs of this growing and changing population.

## **SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PROFILE**

### **NATHAN HALE-RAY HIGH SCHOOL**

Nathan Hale-Ray High School is located in Moodus, part of the town of East Haddam, a rural community of 57.6 square miles, which borders the Connecticut River in southeastern Connecticut. Moodus was named for the Native American tribe, Machimoodus, who lived in the area. It's famed "Moodus Noises," strange, audible rumblings that are seismic in origin, figure prominently in Native American lore. It is for this reason that the teams of Nathan Hale-Ray High School are known as "The Little Noises." East Haddam is replete with natural attractions. It is home to the headwaters of the Eight Mile River, which runs through a greenway of open space. The Devil's Hopyard State Park protects the Eight Mile River as it tumbles over a rushing waterfall and through a hemlock gorge, and the Salmon River borders the town to the north. Three lakes, Bashan, Moodus Reservoir, and Lake Hayward, provide recreation and scenic beauty to all who visit. Interstate 95 (I-95) is located 10 miles south of East Haddam. The capital city of Hartford, Connecticut is located 35 miles north of the town.

East Haddam is a noted tourist destination boasting attractions such as Sunrise and Cave Hill Resorts, the Goodspeed Opera House, the Gelston House Restaurant, Gillette's Castle and Devil's Hopyard State Parks, the Amasa Day House, the Nathan Hale Schoolhouse, and two golf courses, Banner Lodge and Fox Hopyard. There are many local businesses and industries within commuting distance to East Haddam, providing opportunities for employment in the fields of insurance, banking, and defense.

The population of East Haddam was 8,333 in 1999 according to the 2000 Census, an increase of 24.8% from 1990. The population is primarily white and middle class. 3.2% of the town is of other racial origin (state average: 18.4% non-white). The 2000 Census indicated that 28.2% of the population is below the age of 20 and 10.6% is over the age of 65 (state average: 13.8%). Over 90% of the adult residents of East Haddam has a high school diploma, while 30.4% has a bachelor's degree or higher. In Connecticut, 84% of the population has a high school diploma, and 31.4% a bachelor's degree or higher. The median family income is \$70,091 (state average: \$65,521). Occupations for those living in East Haddam are broken down as follows: professionals 39.2%, sales 21.2%, production and transportation 14.6%, service 13.5%, construction 11.0%, and farming, fishing, forestry 0.5%. The overall unemployment rate is 4.5% for those over the age of 25 compared to the state average of 4.7%; 1.0% of residents indicated poverty status in 1999. In 2003-2004, 63% of the property tax was allocated to schools in East Haddam.

### **SCHOOL**

There is one elementary school, East Haddam Elementary School (EHES), comprised of grades K- 4; one middle school, Nathan Hale-Ray Middle School (NHRMS), comprised of grades 5-8; and one high school, Nathan Hale-Ray High School (NHRHS), comprised of grades 9-12. As of October 1, 2004, the student enrollment was 582 students in EHES, 493 students in NHRMS, and 339 students in NHRHS. The total student population in East Haddam grades K-12 was approximately 1,420 as of October 1, 2004. Approximately 11% of the high school age students do not attend NHRHS but instead decide to attend public technical schools or private

schools. The average per pupil expenditure for East Haddam students was \$9,877 for 2003-2004 compared to a state average of \$10,172.

Nathan Hale-Ray High School consists of grades 9-12. The curriculum, which includes English, mathematics, science, and social studies, is enriched with a foreign language program (French and Spanish), art, music, technology education, business education, agricultural sciences, family and consumer science, health, and physical education. A.P. courses in English, U.S. History, Art History, and Biology, along with courses in Advanced Spanish and Calculus, offer students the opportunity to participate in the advanced placement exams offered by the College Board. Tech-prep links high school courses with programs at Middlesex Community College and Radcliffe Hicks School of Agriculture at the University of Connecticut. Students who are juniors and seniors have the opportunity to enroll in courses at Wesleyan University and/or Middlesex Community College. Students are allowed to take courses on-line through Virtual High School. Academic Seminar is required of every student in the school. This results in the completion of a four-year academic portfolio. Beginning with the Class of 2006, the credit requirement for graduation has been increased to 28. Career work experiences are provided to students through an active cooperative work experience (CWE) program, supervised agricultural experience (SAE), and a work-study program. The administration uses the ten common principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools as a vision for school improvement. Examples of changes include a WISE senior experience program and a full AB Block Schedule. Nathan Hale-Ray High School is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

Nathan Hale-Ray High School also is a member of the Century Telecommunication Educational Cooperative (CTEC), a distance-learning consortium composed of four high schools. The other members of CTEC are Norwich Free Academy, Bacon Academy of Colchester, and Lyme-Old Lyme High School (Region 18). Courses are shared among the four schools via a cable television distance-learning program. A course entitled "20th Century China" will be offered to members of the consortium beginning in Spring 2006 and will be taught by a Nathan Hale-Ray High School social studies teacher.

The school day runs from 7:30 AM to 2:00 PM. Nathan Hale-Ray High School operates on an AB block schedule format: 4 classes per day, with each class meeting for at least 84 minutes every other day. Teachers have at least one block period each day for planning. There is a 40-minute common lunch period for the whole school. There is no common planning time for teachers other than the common lunch period for the entire school.

In 2004-2005, there were 29 full-time and 4 part-time teachers employed at NHRHS and the teacher attendance rate for the previous two years was at least 93%. The average teacher-to-student ratio is 16:1; the average student load per teacher is 92 students. The average class size is 16 students. Classes are designated advanced placement, accelerated or academic. Some academic classes are team-taught with a special education teacher.

Since 1999, the enrollment at NHRHS has been very stable and has ranged from 314 to a high of 363 in 2005-2006. The Nathan Hale-Ray High School population average is approximately 350 students in grades 9-12. There have been no significant changes in the school's ethnic/racial/cultural composition. During the 2003-04 school year, 4.8% of the student

body was designated as being minorities. In 1989 - 1999 the percentage was only 1.7%. Hispanics have contributed to the largest ethnic change, making up 2.4% of our school's population. In addition, 2.1% of our students are from non-English speaking homes. There are no non-resident students attending Nathan Hale-Ray High School, and Nathan Hale-Ray Middle School is the only feeder school. On October 1, 2003, the student attendance rate was 97.0%. The student dropout rate decreased from 2.0% in 1997-98 to 1.5% in 2003.

Nathan Hale-Ray High School is a member of the Shoreline Interscholastic Conference which is composed of ten schools. The most recent addition to the conference is the Hyde Leadership School of New Haven, located in Hamden, Connecticut. The Hyde Leadership School has a population of students with a diverse racial, ethnic, and economic background, thus giving our students an opportunity to interact with this population at athletic events, social events, and academic and leadership programs.

Various groups at Nathan Hale-Ray High School such as the Multi-Cultural Club, FFA and the Straight From the Heart Club, give our students opportunities to interact with students and teachers from more diverse backgrounds. Activities have included visiting urban soup kitchens and planning multicultural events with other schools. These types of activities will continue to be scheduled on an annual basis. Plans have been made to participate in the "Names Can Really Hurt Us" program during the fall of 2005. A strong component of this program is respect for ethnic and racial diversity. In order to increase their multicultural awareness, three social studies teachers have spent summers teaching in China.

Nathan Hale-Ray High School encourages participation in foreign exchange programs. During the past four years, Nathan Hale-Ray High School has hosted exchange students from Bolivia, Brazil, Germany, Mexico and Venezuela. During the 2004-2005 school year Nathan Hale-Ray High School hosted three students.

Student progress is assessed by many means. Standardized tests used by the school include the CAPT, PSAT, SAT, and advanced placement exams. The state of Connecticut requires students in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade to take Connecticut Academic Performance Tests (CAPT) in science, math, reading and writing. Tests are scored on a 1-5 scale with 5 being the highest. The state goal is a 4 or better, and in 2004 NHRHS scored as follows: in *mathematics*, 57% met state goal (compared to the state average of 48%); in *science*, 50% met state goal (compared to the state average of 47%); in *reading across the disciplines*, 63% met state goal (compared to the state average of 49%); in *writing across the disciplines*, 68% met state goal (compared to the state average of 55%). NCLB guidelines are a 3 or better to be designated as proficient and NHRHS scored as follows: in *mathematics*, 92% scored a 3 or better (compared to the state average of 76%); in *science*, 96% scored a 3 or better (compared to the state average of 83%); in *reading across the disciplines*, 91% scored a 3 or better (compared to the state average of 79%); in *writing across the disciplines*, 95% scored a 3 or better compared to the state average of 83%.

In 2003-2004 and 2004-2005, 78% of students took the SAT. In 2005 the average score on the verbal test was 524 (compared to the state average of 517) and the average score on the math test was 498 (compared to the state average of 517).

Other than through standardized tests, students can demonstrate proficiency by two methods: all students must complete and present a portfolio which is a BOE graduation requirement. In addition, some students may choose to participate in the WISE program, an individualized senior project. Both options require students to correlate their work to NHRHS expectations for student learning.

The East Haddam Board of Education requires that all students graduating in 2006 earn 28 credits to receive a diploma from NHRHS. Requirements include four years of English, three and a half years of social studies, three years of mathematics, three years of science, a half year of art or music, a half year of computer applications, a half year of vocational education, one year of health, one year of physical education, and four years of academic seminar. In addition, students must score a level three or higher on all four sections of the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) or successfully complete an alternative assessment by May 15th of their senior year. In some instances, this can be accomplished by furnishing proof of having met expectations through portfolio artifacts created and gathered during their high school career. They must also complete and present a portfolio by the spring of their senior year.

Students at NHRHS are routinely and annually recognized for their achievement and effort in academic and non-academic endeavors. With the support of the Rotary Club, every year those students who meet goal on all four CAPT tests are recognized and given a gift certificate at a special awards breakfast. Students are recognized for achieving honors and high honors every quarter, and every spring there is an awards banquet held at UCONN for students who are in the top 10% of their class in grades 5 through 12. Two awards ceremonies are held at the school for seniors and underclassmen in which students receive awards in each course (one for achievement and one for effort). They are also recognized for non-academic achievement in physical fitness, citizenship, and leadership. Our school newsletter disseminates information about the success of our students and teachers in a variety of areas. Students are nominated annually for state-level awards such as the Superintendent's Award, and the CAS-CIAC scholar-athlete and scholar-arts awards. There are awards banquets for sports, music, National Honor Society and FFA. Students also participate in Senate Youth Program.

Approximately 12% of the population at Nathan Hale-Ray High School receives special education support; there are no formal bilingual or ESL classes, but students requiring such services are provided with support from the special education department. In 2004-2005, 37 seniors (50%) and 21 juniors (22%) were enrolled in at least one advanced placement (AP) course; 90% of those taking the AP exams scored 3 (out of 5) or better. In the 2004 graduating class, 59% of the graduating seniors entered a four-year college, 27% entered a community college or technical school, 1% entered military service, and 13% entered full-time employment.

There are several educational institutions in close proximity to East Haddam, affording opportunities to the students and the community. They include Eastern Connecticut State University, Central Connecticut State University, University of Connecticut, Manchester Community College, Middlesex Community College, Wesleyan University, and Middletown Adult Education.

Some of NHRHS's recent school initiatives are block scheduling, an Academic Advisory Program, increased graduation requirements, a portfolio graduation requirement, removal of study halls, membership in Virtual High School, affiliation in the Coalition of Essential Schools, Community Technology Center open 3 days/week, BOE-paid PSATs for all juniors and sophomores, and a formalized CAPT improvement plan in which each teacher has taken responsibility for imbedding CAPT-related skills appropriate to their courses.

Nathan Hale-Ray High School has also nurtured numerous school-community initiatives. Among them are the Partnership Program with Middlesex Community College and agreements with Middlesex Community College and University of Connecticut. In the Cooperative Work Experience class, students are placed in local businesses. East Haddam's finance director volunteers her time to assist in the Globe Junior Achievement Program. The community also offers job shadows for students and guest speakers. Nathan Hale-Ray's Media Center has extended hours for students and the community. There is collaboration between the drama and music departments and the Goodspeed Opera House. Our Electrathon Program receives support from Consumer's Union. In addition, several local civic groups and businesses provide resources for the school in the form of scholarships, the CAPT Breakfast, FFA support, and the sponsoring of foreign exchange students.

At present, Nathan Hale-Ray students may receive college credit by taking courses at Wesleyan University and Middlesex Community College. NHRHS is fortunate to have a partnership with the Ray School Corporation (AKA Ray Board). Every year since 1941 the Ray Board has provided NHRHS with financial support for such things as financing the technology wing; an 18-passenger school bus for the agri-science program, laptops for the Wireless Classroom program, technology grants, and Project Oceanology participation. The agri-science program is fully funded by the Ray Board.

During the 2004-2005 school year, the East Haddam School District Strategic Plan was reviewed and updated. The plan includes district-wide objectives and strategies. These objectives, along with the standards set forth by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, are the driving forces in the ongoing development of the Nathan Hale-Ray High School Improvement Plan. The plan focuses on improving student achievement on standardized tests, increasing differentiated instruction, the development and implementation of a comprehensive CAPT improvement plan, preparation for an October 2006 NEASC Accreditation visit, and evaluation and improvement of the academic seminar/student portfolio initiative.

This High School Improvement Plan has led to the following changes and accomplishments:

- CAPT scores have shown improvement over the past four years
- an increase in scores in both the verbal and math SAT
- the successful implementation of block scheduling
- an increase in the number of advanced placement courses offered at the high school
- an increase in the number of students enrolled in advanced placement courses
- the opportunity for students to take and get credit for on-line courses

- . Nathan Hale-Ray High School affiliation with the Coalition of Essential Schools
- . the elimination of basic level courses
- . the elimination of study halls and their replacement with Academic Seminar classes
- . a full-credit portfolio requirement for all grades
- . increased participation in the senior WISE program
- . required presentation of senior portfolios
- . SAT prep offered to juniors during academic seminar class
- . administration of PSAT to all 10th and 11th graders without cost to the students.

The strategic plan requires us to evaluate all of these initiatives during the 2005-2006 school year and to report their impact on student performance to the board of education.

Upon review of the information gathered as part of the school and community profile, the faculty and staff have identified the following as the most critical issues and challenges facing Nathan Hale-Ray High School: the small size of the school limits the variety and number of courses that can be offered to the students; the small size also limits common planning time for teachers to collaborate and to offer co-curricular courses; and the homogeneity of the student body raises concern with regard to the ability of the students to understand, accept, and tolerate cultural, racial, ethnic and economic diversity.

# NATHAN HALE-RAY HIGH SCHOOL

## MISSION STATEMENT

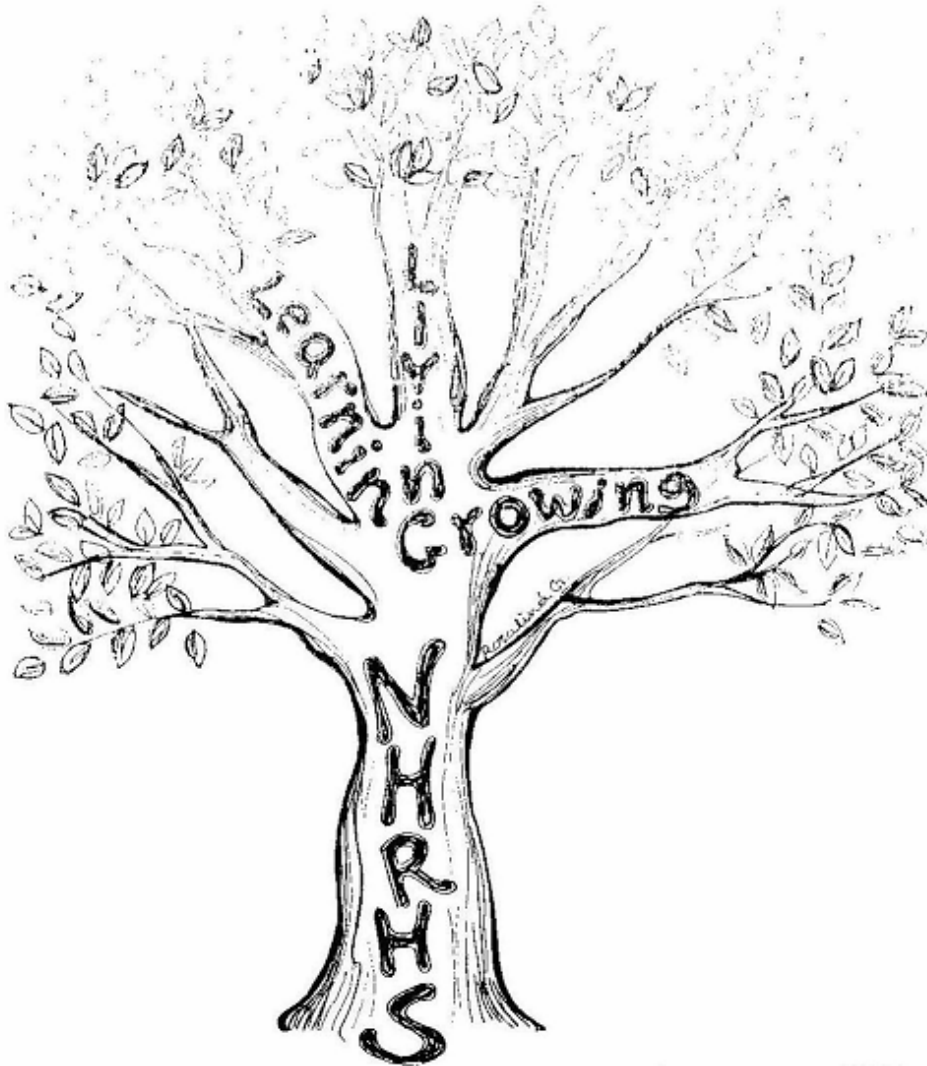
### Living, Learning and Growing

We LIVE in a community supporting the development of the intellectual, social, emotional and physical qualities of each individual.

We LEARN through a rigorous, personalized curriculum which encourages everyone to reach his/her full potential to be a responsible, respectful, self-sufficient and productive member of our town and society at large.

We GROW through active reflection and revision embedded in authentic work and assessment to ensure students develop the essential skills to be life-long learners.

(Revised 12/8/04)



**Nathan Hale-Ray High School**  
Expectations with Indicators for Student Learning

**Academic Expectations**

The Nathan Hale-Ray High School student will:

1. Communicate effectively in both written and oral formats for a variety of purposes.

a.) Reading:

- form an initial understanding
- develop an interpretation
- make a personal connection
- determine a critical stance

b.) Writing:

- establish a critical stance
- support an assertion
- edit and revise
- analyze and evaluate information
- use proper grammar and appropriate vocabulary
- employ differences between spoken and written language

c.) Speaking and listening:

- speak coherently to individuals and to groups
- use standard English
- respond appropriately to what is heard and seek clarification if necessary

2. Problem-solve effectively.

- analyze and evaluate data and information
- apply problem solving strategies
- utilize time and resources efficiently
- use higher order thinking skills to create alternatives

3. Use technology effectively.

- apply technology as a learning tool across the disciplines
- use technology as a means of communication

4. Demonstrate creative expression.

- apply previous knowledge and experience to develop authentic work
- create original work that expresses individual interests and talents

## **Social and Civic Expectations**

The Nathan Hale-Ray High School students will:

1. Exhibit skills, attitudes and behaviors necessary for life-long success.
  - Evaluate personal strengths and weaknesses
  - Make informed life and career decisions
  - Understand consequences and benefits of behavioral choices
  - Work and learn independently and cooperatively
  - Resolve conflict through discussion and/or compromise
  
2. Demonstrate good citizenship.
  - Recognize and demonstrate respect for diversity and the individuality of others
  - Participate or assume a leadership role in community service and/or school activities
  - Strive to sustain the environment
  - Understand the basic functions of our government
  
3. Demonstrate the skills and behaviors necessary for lifetime physical wellness.
  - Understand the benefits of physical activity and other beneficial health choices
  - Make informed wellness related decisions
  - Regularly participate in physical activity that positively impacts physical well-being

Revised: October 17, 2005

**COMMISSION ON  
PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

**TEACHING AND LEARNING  
STANDARDS**

---

**MISSION AND EXPECTATIONS  
FOR STUDENT LEARNING**

---

**CURRICULUM**

---

**INSTRUCTION**

---

**ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT  
LEARNING**

---

# 1

## TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

---

### Mission and Expectations for Student Learning

---

The school's mission statement describes the essence of what the school as a community of learners is seeking to achieve. The expectations for student learning are based on and drawn from the school's mission statement. These expectations are the fundamental goals by which the school continually assesses the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Every component of the school community must focus on enabling all students to achieve the school's expectations for student learning.

1. The mission statement and expectations for student learning shall be developed by the school community and approved and supported by the professional staff, the school board, and any other school-wide governing organization.
2. The school's mission statement shall represent the school community's fundamental values and beliefs about student learning.
3. The school shall define school-wide academic, civic, and social learning expectations that:
  - a. are measurable;
  - b. reflect the school's mission.
4. For each academic expectation in the mission the school shall have a targeted level of successful achievement identified in a rubric.
5. The school shall have indicators by which it assesses the school's progress in achieving school-wide civic and social expectations.
6. The mission statement and the school's expectations for student learning shall guide the procedures, policies, and decisions of the school and shall be evident in the culture of the school.
7. The school shall review regularly the mission statement and expectations for student learning using a variety of data to ensure that they reflect student needs, community expectations, the district mission, and state and national standards.

## MISSION AND EXPECTATIONS

### CONCLUSIONS

The mission statement and student learning expectations are a product of cooperation and collaboration among members of the school community. The current mission statement of Nathan Hale-Ray High School was created from the school's pre-existing statement of purpose. The faculty began the revision process in the fall of 2004 assisted by a consultant from LEAD New England. After numerous meetings, a draft emerged using the themes of "Living, Learning, and Growing," words from the statement of purpose that had particular meaning to the faculty because of their originating document. Following further discussion and revision, the document was approved at a faculty meeting. Students were the next participants in the process. Through the school's academic seminar class, students had the opportunity to review, comment and provide feedback on the draft. During this part of the process, a senior art student created a visual representation of an oak tree intertwined with the words of the mission statement that became the official logo for the school's mission statement. The next constituency group from whom feedback was sought was the parents. Despite numerous avenues for feedback provided to parents, only a small amount of feedback was received. Community feedback was received in the form of a letter sent by the East Haddam Historical Society. Their suggestion for a wording change was discussed and subsequently added by the faculty. The final step in the process was a presentation by the steering committee co-chairs to the board of education in December of 2004. The board approved the mission unanimously.

In developing the expectations for student learning, the faculty emulated the process for the development of the mission statement including working with the aforementioned consultant, and providing feedback opportunities to the students and parents. The mission statement served as a strong influencing factor for this process. The board of education also approved this document unanimously. Because the entire school community had a role in the process of developing the mission statement and expectations for student learning, there is a sense of ownership by all groups, and both documents are highly visible and have become engrained in the culture of the school. (students teachers, facility tour, self-study)

The Nathan Hale-Ray High School Mission Statement represents the school community's fundamental values and beliefs about student learning. In the mission statement development process, faculty, students, administrators, parents, and the community at large all participated. The mission statement is prominently displayed in classrooms and public areas as well as school documents such as the program of studies and student planners. The careful manner by which the process proceeded, with numerous opportunities for input and revision from stakeholders, speaks to the ownership evident in the school. Students are well-versed in the tenets of the document, and the faculty strives to embed its ideas in their assignments. Because of the inclusive manner in which the mission statement was developed, it has become a fundamental part of the day to day operations of the school. (self-study, students, parents and teachers, facility tours)

Nathan Hale-Ray High School has developed expectations for student learning that are measurable and reflect the mission statement. The prior model of expectations for student learning was a seventeen item skills checklist. Through a review process, the faculty pared down the checklist initially to a series of five core expectations in the two areas of academic expectations and social and civic expectations, later adding two other areas for a total of seven. These revisions were generated through faculty reflections and a desire to make the document more complete. Each expectation is related to the school's mission statement and is further defined by a series of measurable indicators. The seven core expectations are visibly posted throughout the school and students and parents are familiar with them. Efforts are made by faculty members to relate and make connections between assignments and the expectations. The prominence of the student expectations within the classroom setting and in the public areas of the school has resulted in school-wide knowledge and familiarity with the expectations for student learning. (self-study, teachers, students, observations)

Each academic expectation for student learning has a rubric that identifies levels of achievement towards a goal of mastery. Each rubric follows a standard format using four levels of achievement. Each level is clearly-defined and reflects an appropriate series of indicators. The faculty divided the responsibility of developing the rubrics to assess each academic expectation among teachers with relevant expertise. Following the development of the draft rubrics, the faculty was afforded the opportunity to review them and offer suggestions for changes. All of the school-wide rubrics were approved by a vote of the faculty. In addition to the school-wide rubrics, teachers also use departmental and/or content-specific rubrics. While some of the faculty members have been trained in the development and use of rubrics, there is a varying level of familiarity, comfort, and use of the rubrics among the faculty. There is a need for review of the various department-specific and content-specific rubrics to ensure that they are aligned with the school-wide rubrics. Further, there needs to be an analysis of rubric use by faculty members. While each academic expectation has a school-wide rubric related to it, course and assignment rubrics need to be reviewed to ensure commonality of purpose and alignment with the school-wide rubrics. (self-study, teachers, school leadership)

Nathan Hale-Ray High School has developed a series of indicators and data sources to assess student progress toward compliance with the social and civic expectations for student learning. Each expectation has well-defined specific goals which set the desired behaviors for students. In addition, the faculty has identified sources from which data can be collected in order to determine whether or not students have met the expectation. These sources include standard school data such as graduation and dropout rates, attendance and discipline records, as well as curricular and extracurricular vehicles such as completion of courses and/or participation in school clubs that emphasize the tenets of these expectations. Specific examples of clubs and courses include the National Honor Society, the Multi-Cultural Club, FFA, and courses in the areas of business, civics, and health. However, there is no process to systematically analyze data to assess the degree to which the school is achieving social and civic expectations. (self-study, teachers, school leadership)

In the main, the mission statement and the school's expectations for student learning guide Nathan Hale-Ray High School's culture. Participants in the school community, faculty, staff, students, and parents are aware of and support the concepts of the mission statement and

the school's academic, civic, and social expectations. Students and parents speak of the school's efforts to promote appropriate academic placement to ensure a balance between academic rigor and the social and educational needs of the student. The school has incorporated the mission statement in its student and faculty handbooks and program of studies. Samples of reflective writing guide sheets collected from some teachers include appended academic expectations. Some teachers draw connections between student queries as to relevancy of subject matter to the mission statement. Students speak of the effectiveness of merging the mission concepts to the visual metaphor of the NHRHS tree. However, discussions with faculty members and students indicate that on-going reform initiatives are still too new to generate sufficient data to determine the impact of these initiatives. Faculty members speak of the need for continued dialogue and professional development support to align use of rubrics uniformly throughout the academic culture. (teachers, parents, students, student work, observations)

Nathan Hale-Ray High School has no formal review process in place to review the mission statement and expectations for student learning. The school lists the variety of data that they will evaluate to assess the mission and expectations as: student grades, CAPT scores, post graduation data, and discipline reports. However, faculty members express a desire for continued professional development opportunities and time for open discussion with administrators to review the learning expectations and accompanying rubrics. Students and parents wanted to be included in the review process. The faculty has taken a survey assessing their practices with rubrics; but no analysis of that data has been done. Nathan Hale-Ray should be proud of its efforts to embed its mission and expectations within its culture, but the absence of a formal review process makes it difficult to determine the degree to which the mission statement and expectation are realized, and there is no guarantee of continuing relevance. (Self-study, teachers, students, student work)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. School's commitment to infusing the mission statement into the culture of the school
2. The effort to involve varied stakeholders in meaningful ways in the development of the mission statement and expectations for student learning
3. The careful process used to develop school-wide rubrics for assessing expectations for student learning
4. The use of the mission and expectations in guiding the decision-making process
5. The students' knowledge of the tenets contained within the mission and expectations

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Implement a systematic process to analyze data to assess the degree to which the school is achieving its academic, social, and civic expectations
2. Align the portfolio process with the values of the mission statement

3. Formalize avenues of communication among administrators, faculty and staff members, students, and parents in implementing the mission and expectations

# 2

## TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

---

### Curriculum

---

The curriculum, which includes coursework, co-curricular activities, and other school-approved educational experiences, is the school's formal plan to fulfill its mission statement and expectations for student learning. The curriculum links the school's beliefs, its expectations for student learning, and its instructional practices. The strength of that link is dependent upon the professional staff's commitment to and involvement in a comprehensive, ongoing review of the curriculum.

1. Each curriculum area shall identify those school-wide academic expectations for which it is responsible.
2. The curriculum shall be aligned with the school-wide academic expectations and shall ensure that all students have sufficient opportunity to practice and achieve each of those expectations.
3. The written curriculum shall:
  - prescribe content;
  - integrate relevant school-wide learning expectations;
  - identify course-specific learning goals;
  - suggest instructional strategies;
  - suggest assessment techniques including the use of school-wide rubrics.
4. The curriculum shall engage all students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking as well as provide opportunities for the authentic application of knowledge and skills.
5. The curriculum shall:
  - be appropriately integrated;
  - emphasize depth of understanding over breadth of coverage.
6. The school shall provide opportunities for all students to extend learning beyond the normal course offerings and the school campus.
7. There shall be effective curricular coordination and articulation between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district.

8. Instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, staffing levels, and the resources of the library/media center shall be sufficient to allow for the implementation of the curriculum.
9. The professional staff shall be actively involved in the ongoing development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum based on assessments of student performance in achieving the school's academic expectations and course-specific learning goals.
10. The school shall commit sufficient time, financial resources, and personnel to the development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum.
11. Professional development activities shall support the development and implementation of the curriculum.

## CONCLUSIONS

School-wide learning expectations are used in a way that accurately reflects the school's mission across all disciplines. Nathan Hale-Ray High School recently completed a revision of its mission statement that has established six learning expectations based on the Connecticut Frameworks and Common Core of Learning. Each curriculum area is responsible for implementing specific learning expectations. Curriculum guides are clear and accessible to all staff members and stakeholders via the public school webpage. Learning expectations are included in class offerings at all levels of instruction (advanced placement, accelerated, and academic). However, the application of school-wide rubrics for measuring learning expectations is inconsistent. (program of studies, observations, self-study, teachers, student work)

The curriculum is aligned with the school-wide learning expectations, and students have opportunities to practice and achieve those expectations at Hale-Ray. The program of studies includes the mission and learning expectations of the school. In concept, the block schedule and portfolio class provide students the time and guidance to revise their work to ensure that students have many opportunities to document and understand their achievement of each of the school's learning expectations. The documented curriculum is well organized and comprehensive and provides rigor for all levels, but the implementation of this rigor is not evident in some of the less academic classes. Connections between the printed curriculum and the classroom instruction were evident and teachers are following the curriculum. Most observed classes engaged the students effectively and little off-task time was evident. There is a broad range of support services for those students who have difficulties, including extra help sessions during portfolio class, X block, and after school, and students who need the assistance are supported by instructional assistants in the classrooms. Teachers are aware of the varied learning styles and needs of their students and differentiate the instruction and assessments accordingly to provide everyone an opportunity to learn and demonstrate success. The learning expectations are implemented in a variety of ways for learners. For example, business class offerings emphasize authentic learning by providing students with opportunities to market products, and Advanced Technology Education students build electric cars for a competition with other schools. Attempts to differentiate instruction through varied content, offerings, and assessments can be found, but these student-centered teaching techniques are not used in every classroom. (teachers, curriculum documents, program of studies, observations)

There is a written curriculum in most areas that prescribes content-specific learning goals, integrates relevant school-wide learning expectations, and includes course-specific learning goals, instructional methods, and assessment options; however, there is no well-developed curricula in key areas such as the library/media program and the academic seminar/portfolio process that is led by many different people and requires unifying concepts and procedures. A comprehensive and inclusive library/media curriculum does not exist limiting its integration into the curriculum. Approximately half of the staff has been trained in Understanding by Design techniques, but sufficient time to work on revising curriculum has not been provided. Instructional strategies and assessment techniques are not provided in some areas of curriculum. Use of school-wide rubrics is inconsistent, and students sometimes

do not understand the method by which they are assessed, so student performance is negatively affected. There is an academic seminar handbook that outlines expectations and purpose for the portfolio class. In this four-year course students create a portfolio of their work which is intended to be a multi-faceted performance-based assessment. These student artifacts are also used as an alternative to graduation requirements when students do not meet CAPT proficiency levels. Teachers, students, and parents report that this class, which was instituted four years ago when study halls were removed from the schedule, is a “work in progress.” Students select their best work of the year and reflect upon their learning, but the rest of class time is used to make up work, see teachers for extra help, or communicate with teachers on a personal level regarding school issues. During their senior year, students present their portfolios to their academic advisors and peers. Parents, teachers, and students note that the time allotted to portfolio could be used to expand elective offerings. Parents say that students do not always understand the purpose or value of this project, nor are there consistent teacher expectations with regard to satisfying this required course. The lack of a curriculum in the library/media area impacts its effective integration into the school’s curricula and negatively impacts student learning. A clearer articulation of the purpose of the portfolio and a standardized method of assessment will promote the value of this process to the school community, and a purposeful library/media curriculum will assure that all students learn essential technical and research skills. (student work, teachers, parents, students, curriculum documents).

The curriculum provides students with opportunities for the authentic application of knowledge and skills. Students build electric cars, design fiberglass car bodies, design steering systems, analyze advertisements, develop marketing plans, rewrite school laws, and plan trips to foreign countries. Advanced placement offerings have increased while basic classes have been eliminated. There are challenging curricula in many areas, but expectations and challenge levels vary, resulting in uneven levels of rigor for students. Inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking are not found in all samples of student work. Although it is not a component of all classes and curricula, authentic application of knowledge and skills does occur. Enhanced curriculum and improved opportunities for students to make real-world connections would engage students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking. (self-study, teachers, students, instructional facilitators)

The curriculum at Nathan Hale-Ray High School attempts to integrate across disciplines and provide depth of learning over breadth of coverage. The mathematics and science curricula specifically address standards through their governing agencies. There are opportunities for students to pursue in-depth learning, and the WISE program allows students to pursue their interests. The work-study program fosters students to explore career interests and motivates students to study specific areas in the curriculum. Language arts and history foster integration as students study the progressive period and the *Great Gatsby*. Algebra II and chemistry classes use an integrated approach in analyzing gas laws through the application of mathematical functions. While higher order thinking exercises can be found, the use of essential questions to guide teaching and learning across all disciplines is sporadic because not all content areas have a formalized curriculum based on the Understanding by Design framework. Full implementation of the Understanding by Design model should

ensure the use of a common curriculum format containing essential questions, instructional and assessment practices. (teachers, instructional facilitators, self-study)

Nathan Hale-Ray provides opportunities for students to extend learning beyond the normal course offerings and the school campus. Students can take classes at Wesleyan and Middlesex Community College. Greater Hartford Academy for the Performing Arts is an option for students. All Agri-Science students have a supervised agricultural experience for learning opportunities outside of school that address personal interests. The Cooperative Work Experience class connects students to employers in the local community, and through the WISE Program, seniors can personalize their education and experience internships with local and state community members. The Virtual High School offers students advanced placement and other courses that are not offered at NHRHS. Foreign exchange programs have placed students in foreign countries for an alternative education experience. These multiple programs and opportunities to extend learning beyond the campus and the school day enhance student learning. (self-study, teachers, school leadership team, guidance counselors)

Ongoing curriculum committees seek to improve the coordination and articulation of all K-12 curricula. Curriculum half-days are in place to discuss curricular issues in which members may be present from all grade levels and content areas. The curriculum council facilitates curriculum revision and submits curricula to the superintendent for final approval. There is extensive communication between sending schools' and Hale-Ray's leadership teams with regard to articulation and implementation of curriculum. The five-year curriculum review cycle is comprehensive and promotes curricular updates of textbooks, materials, and resources. While coordination is enhanced by monthly curriculum meetings for each discipline with representatives from each grade level and school, there is a clear need to develop a systemized process that identifies, aggregates, analyzes, and reports data in order to facilitate the improvement of curriculum and instruction. The conscientious effort of the superintendent and the staff notwithstanding, there is a need to improve the system-wide coordination of curriculum development, implementation, and revision. The continual modification of national and state standards, the curriculum-related mandates of NCLB, and the ongoing need for the articulation of curriculum in grades K-12 are taxing the current system for improving and aligning curriculum. (central office administrators, instructional facilitators, teachers, standard team members)

The accessibility of instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and staffing levels, with the exception of access to the library/media center, is sufficient to allow for the implementation of the curriculum. Twenty percent of the school's technology is replaced every year. There are not enough laptops for an entire class, but technology is used everywhere. There are computer labs in many locations throughout the school. There are three Smart boards available and there are also portable LCD projectors for teachers to use. Because there are no study halls, students can freely use the media center only during X-block (lunch). The media center is not open before or after school, nor is it open to individual students seeking access for project research during class time. Teachers can schedule to use the media center for entire classes to do research, but they primarily use the computers rather than texts. Videos and DVDs form a large part of the collection.

Textbook needs are assessed during the curriculum revision cycle, but some areas are using old texts. The fitness center is well-appointed but too small to accommodate all students who would like to use it at one time. The average class size is approximately 19 students, and many teachers teach all course offerings in their areas, for instance, a language teacher may teach all four levels of French. Some classes are offered on a cyclical basis to accommodate student interest, and occasionally, students will be denied a space in a class due to enrollment or scheduling. Instructional leaders are conduits of information from the administration but do not have the responsibility for guiding content area curriculum. An expanded vision of future curricular directions and the needed resources for implementation will advance the application of curriculum.(teacher interviews, self-study, observation, curricular documents)

Curriculum is evaluated and revised according to a five-year cycle that includes teachers, school administrators, and the superintendent, who analyze test results and other data. Testing results from CAPT, PSAT, SAT, advanced placement testing, and other data are studied to assess student performance in achieving academic expectations. CAPT results are most influential in initiating remediation and support for student mastery of basic learning goals. School-wide rubrics have been instituted but are not yet used consistently to provide additional data regarding student performance in achieving the school's academic expectations and course learning goals. More time to work on curriculum is necessary to allow teachers to react to the changing needs of the school's population. Time for regular and systematic collection and discussion of student work would provide teachers with authentic data for curriculum evaluation. Consistent use of school-wide rubrics can open another avenue for measuring the effectiveness of curriculum design, and there is a need for better coordination for the development, implementation, and revision of curriculum. (administration, superintendent, teachers, self-study, curricular documents).

Although time and financial resources are committed to curriculum development, evaluation, and revision, more structured opportunities are needed. The district has a five-year curriculum revision cycle that promotes regular review of curriculum documents and course supplies. Curriculum writing is generally done over the summer although time may be made available during the school year as needed. The opportunities currently provided for curriculum work do not afford teachers time to make meaningful progress because they are often used for other purposes. Recently, time designated for curriculum work has been used for self-study development. The superintendent is responsible for overseeing curriculum improvement and development and curriculum committees are charged with writing and assessing curriculum. While many teachers have been trained in UbD methods, a commitment of time and personnel is needed to discuss and develop units, course understandings, and essential questions; a process best accomplished collaboratively. NHRHS has a small staff and teachers often have four teaching preps, limiting the time they can spend on planning and revision for any one class. Collegial working partners, adequate work time, vision, and direction in the development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum would enhance student learning. (school administrators, superintendent, teachers, self-study, curricular documents)

Teachers do not meet collaboratively to discuss and share work and the results of student assessments for the purpose of revising the curriculum, improving instructional

strategies, and assessment practices. There is no scheduled on-going collaboration among teachers for discussing student work and assessment, revising curriculum, and improving instructional strategies, although some teachers collaborate informally to discuss teaching and learning. Both administrators and teachers recognize that scheduled, structured collaboration would enhance the quality of curricula and the efficacy of teaching. It is necessary to provide professional development in data interpretation and to collect the data to make this process effective. District-wide and department-wide curricular meetings are held monthly, and the results of these meetings are communicated to all teachers in writing. Four early dismissal days are scheduled each year for the purpose of working on curriculum. Collaboration takes place between the special education teachers and the regular education teachers to discuss and improve instructional strategies, and there is additional collaboration in team-taught classes, but there is less collaboration between teachers and special education paraprofessionals. Limited communication between these two groups limits the paraprofessionals understanding of student educational needs. In all these opportunities to collaborate, and in any new ones provided, it is necessary to have data from effective assessment to inform the process. (teachers, school support staff, school leadership team)

Professional development activities offered to teachers have supported the development and implementation of the curriculum. Professional development activities are determined by the superintendent and building administrators in alignment with the professional development plan. The curriculum development cycle and the school strategic plan appropriately influence professional development opportunities relating to curriculum. While many teachers have had training in Understanding by Design, further professional development is required in order to align all curricula to the UbD format. The standardization of curriculum based upon Understanding by Design concepts may provide consistency across all disciplines fostering a common teaching and learning experience for Hale-Ray students. (self-study, teachers, school leadership team)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The strong evidence of the mission statement throughout the school that permeates the culture and drives the learning expectations
2. The effective alignment of the curriculum with the academic expectations for student learning
3. Student-centered curriculum that encourages personalization
4. Progressive initiatives for instructional and curricular improvement
5. The learning expectations that are embedded in the culture of the school
6. Opportunities for students that extend learning beyond the normal curriculum
7. The availability of on-line courses that expands opportunities beyond the classroom

8. A clearly defined curriculum revision cycle
9. Release time for curriculum development
10. The active participation in the development and revision of curricula by administrators and teachers

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Provide system-wide coordination of curriculum development, implementation, and revision
2. Systematically identify, aggregate, analyze, and report data to improve curriculum and instruction
3. Incorporate the Understanding by Design frameworks in all curricular areas
4. Increase the opportunities for students to engage in learning activities that result in authentic, real-world, and problem-solving experiences
5. Provide a curriculum for the portfolio process that clarifies the purpose, guides the process, and assesses its results
6. Consistently evaluate the portfolio process and academic seminar classes
7. Formalize the use of school-wide rubrics among disciplines
8. Expand the integration of differentiated instruction across all disciplines
9. Dedicate time and resources for instructional staff to develop, evaluate, and revise curriculum
10. Formalize a process whereby teachers discuss student work, analyze data, and devise strategies to improve instruction and the implementation of curriculum
11. Formalize opportunities to encourage resident experts/teacher leaders to provide school-based professional development to enhance curriculum development, instruction, and assessment
12. Optimize time for instruction and curricular application by analyzing the effects of X-block and the simultaneous scheduling of academic seminar
13. Align various department-specific and content-specific rubrics with the school-wide rubrics for academic expectations

14. Improve communication between teachers and special education paraprofessionals to improve the understanding of the students' educational needs

# 3

## TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

---

### Instruction

---

The quality of instruction in a school is the single most important factor affecting the quality of student learning, the achievement of expectations for student learning, the delivery of the curriculum, and the assessment of student progress. Instructional practices must be grounded in the school's mission and expectations for student learning, supported by research in best practice, and refined and improved based on identified student needs. Teachers are expected to be reflective about their instructional strategies and to collaborate with their colleagues about instruction and student learning.

1. Instructional strategies shall be consistent with the school's mission statement and expectations for student learning.
2. Instructional strategies shall:
  - personalize instruction;
  - make connections across disciplines;
  - engage students as active learners;
  - engage students as self-directed learners;
  - involve all students in higher order thinking to promote depth of understanding;
  - provide opportunities for students to apply knowledge or skills;
  - promote student self-assessment and self-reflection.
3. Teachers shall use feedback from a variety of sources including other teachers, students, supervisors, and parents as a means of improving instruction.
4. Teachers shall be expert in their content area, knowledgeable about current research on effective instructional approaches, and reflective about their own practices.
5. Discussion of instructional strategies shall be a significant part of the professional culture of the school.
6. Technology shall be integrated into and supportive of teaching and learning.

7. The school's professional development program shall be guided by identified instructional needs and shall provide opportunities for teachers to develop and improve their instructional strategies.
8. Teacher supervision and evaluation processes shall be used to improve instruction for the purposes of enhancing student learning and meeting student needs.

## CONCLUSIONS

Nathan Hale-Ray High School has developed instructional strategies and practices that are consistent with the school's stated mission and expectations for student learning. Creative problem-solving and learner reflection are demonstrated in student work samples, while a variety of effective options for teacher-student and teacher-parent communication are regularly used. Representative samples include cause and effect writing assignments that require making connections between key concepts, creative expression projects, and authentic application of technological principles. There are high teacher expectations for active student participation throughout course levels. Students enrolled in heterogeneous classes participate to a comparable degree to those students enrolled in those courses that are more homogeneously grouped. However, the academic expectations are generally implemented in instructional practice in varying degrees. A teacher-centered instructional approach was observed in several classes. The rigor in content and standard of excellence for student work vary significantly. Because important instructional strategies are still emerging as coordinated initiatives, opportunities provided for problem-solving, authentic application, and reflection are not yet based on expectations for student learning for the school as a whole and both student work and classroom observations support this conclusion. (observations, student shadowing, self-study, and student work)

Teachers regularly attempt to personalize instruction, engage students as active learners, and provide opportunities for self-reflection and self-assessment. Efforts at engaging self-directed learners, making connections across disciplines, involving all students in higher order thinking, promoting depth of understanding are not consistently implemented by the entire faculty. Strategies and practices that personalize instruction and provide opportunities to apply knowledge of skills are found in some classrooms. In music, landscape design and maintenance, power of advertising, and engineering and product design courses, students are afforded opportunities to apply their knowledge toward authentic outcomes. Students state that their teachers are available to assist them as needed and that choices are offered on project assignments that allow them to actively demonstrate their knowledge in their own way. However, observations reveal that some lessons are teacher-centered, significantly reducing opportunities for self-directed and active learning and not promoting student engagement. (observations, student shadowing, teachers, students)

All students are required to build a four-year portfolio in which they collect samples of their work upon which they must reflect. While some students believe that these reflection opportunities are enlightening, increasing their awareness of their own learning styles, a substantial number of students disagree and find the portfolio requirements lack validity. Moreover, students do not clearly understand the purpose of portfolios and they do not think it is appropriate that teachers rather than students often determine which artifacts are included. Inconsistencies in the manner in which teachers mentor the development of portfolios and implement instructional strategies adversely affect a uniform standard of academic excellence and do not foster student understanding of the process. (observations, student shadowing, teachers, students)

Many teachers use feedback from colleagues, students, and test data to shape instructional practices. The majority of teachers report that they use feedback from others to improve teaching. Students and parents share this perception. Teachers and parents regularly communicate using the secure e-mail feature of Edline<sup>®</sup>, a web-based service through which teachers publish grades, homework, course syllabi, class expectations, and links to resource materials. Students report that teachers periodically modify instructional practices based on student input. Parents believe that their input does contribute to instructional improvement. Teachers report that they engage in informal dialog with colleagues to share ideas and enhance instructional practices, including the development of interdisciplinary instruction. However, teachers also report that, due to time limitations, very few formal opportunities for such dialog are available. Without a formal process to acquire and reflect upon test data and feedback from a range of sources, students, parents, and teachers are missing a rich and meaningful opportunity to improve instruction. (survey, self-study, teachers, students, parents)

The Nathan Hale-Ray teachers are highly competent in their respective subject areas; 90% of the faculty holds certification in their assigned subject areas, and two teachers have earned doctoral degrees, but on the whole, they are not consistently employing best practices for instruction within the block schedule, limiting differentiation of instruction. Some teachers do not effectively use the 84 minutes allocated for block instruction; teachers were observed using most of the block period for teacher-centered instruction. These lecture-style lessons featured few strategies for differentiation of instruction, authentic tasks, and performance tasks. Other findings show that higher order thinking is not fostered consistently by all teachers, and a significant number of assignments only reaches surface depth. In several classes, students were allowed to consume time non-productively as they were completing homework or engaging in non-instructional activities on computers. Hence, academic rigor is not pervasive throughout the instructional program. Despite having a highly qualified faculty at Nathan Hale-Ray High School, the lack of training and integration of effective instructional methodologies necessary for optimal use of block schedule time negatively impacts student learning. (observations, students, student work, parent, self-study)

While informal conversations about instructional strategies and practices take place in department meetings and ad hoc encounters, teachers report that there is little planned time to examine student work collaboratively in order to determine if instruction is being differentiated effectively. Also, there is no formal process in place to provide teachers with feedback about their use of instructional time within the block schedule. Without these components in the professional culture, the impact of data from assessments of student work to inform instruction is minimized. (meetings with teachers, self-study, teachers).

Throughout the facility, the utilization of technology is promoted in all instructional areas. Technology resources include: the library/media center computer capabilities, LCD projector and screens, smart boards, the world language lab, computer assisted drafting (CAD) stations in the technical education lab, the video production suite, digital microscopes in the biology lab and analytical equipment used in chemistry, the agriculture and aquaculture equipment, the sophisticated fitness monitoring device (Polar Tri-Fit 700), and the opportunities available through Virtual High School (VHS). These show a breadth of

technological options accessible to students for the improvement of their learning. The district technology specialist has expressed her commitment to full integration of technology into all curricular areas, and the majority of faculty members is also committed to this goal. However, the faculty and students do not yet fully employ technology in their classes, and students are not allowed to access the school library/media center technology or the computer labs as independent users before, during or after school. There is untapped potential in the school's technological resources, and the complete range of instructional capabilities of these facilities must not be ignored, but the appropriate incorporation of technology into instruction and the learning process must be formally supported. (self-study, facility tour, central office administrators, teachers)

The Nathan Hale-Ray High School faculty participates in a variety of professional development activities that are selected in response to instructional needs, but these needs are not systematically identified or coordinated. Some teachers belong to professional organizations, subscribe to professional journals, and attend state and national conferences. Dependable financial resources are necessary to insure the continuous improvement of instruction, and funding for professional conferences is provided, but teachers feel more time for in-house professional development is needed. While more time would serve as an added resource, adequate time may be available if it is carefully allocated and structured. The limited time set aside for formal professional development is organized and used effectively, but other existing time is often overlooked for its potential to provide opportunities for formal discussion about improvement of instruction. This existing time lies within faculty meetings, department meetings, team meetings, before and after school, during X block, and during release time. The administration encourages teachers to seek out and attend workshops and conferences of interest and provides support to facilitate their attendance. This training provides an excellent resource for teachers; but there is no coherent plan to train the staff in identified priority areas concerning instruction. As a result, some members of the faculty continue to employ elements of Understanding by Design (UBD), effective use of block scheduling, and differentiated instructional strategies, but they are doing so without an adequate degree of training in these areas, resulting in varying degrees of success. The absence of careful coordination and long-range planning of professional development activities results in disparate faculty interpretations and applications of current research and effective instructional approaches. Consequently, instruction at Nathan Hale-Ray does not uniformly serve the students to the degree that reflects the full capabilities of the staff. (self-study, administrators, and teachers).

The administration and faculty support new teachers, and there is a structured supervision and evaluation program for all teachers. This program provides non-tenured teachers with a minimum of three classroom observations per year with pre- and post-conference opportunities. Tenured teachers who demonstrate competence are placed on a two-year professional growth cycle including goal setting and reflection, classroom observation, and pre- and post-conference opportunities. Support is offered to faculty members who are obligated to meet the requirements of the Beginning Educator Support Training (BEST) program. According to the teachers, informal collaboration is frequent and ongoing, and updated instructional approaches are continually discussed. However, with the exception of new teachers, their mentors, and those teachers identified as instructional

facilitators, reflective practices and critical collaboration for instructional improvement are not formalized beyond the meetings required under the district's teacher evaluation plan which ensures that minimal time is allocated for reflective discussions. The implementation of a supervision and evaluation plan focused on individual goals and instructional improvements positively impacts student learning. However, the lack of formal time set aside for professional discourse about instructional practices negatively impacts opportunities to improve student learning. (self-study, teachers, administrators)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The growing number of teachers implementing instructional practices appropriate for a block schedule
2. The self-assessment opportunities for student reflection beyond the portfolio process
3. The instruction enhanced by the highly personalized climate
4. The use of Edline® to enhance communication about instruction, student achievement, and course expectations
5. The availability of technology to support instruction
6. The many opportunities for authentic application of knowledge and skills

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Embed expectations for student learning into instructional practices
2. Ensure an appropriate level of academic challenge for all students throughout all curricular areas
3. Formalize opportunities to acquire feedback and analyze data to improve instruction
4. Structure existing time to provide formal opportunities for collaboration among colleagues to reflect on student work, analyze student performance, and enhance instruction
5. Provide additional professional development focused on specific instructional strategies, including teaching in the block schedule
6. Optimize instruction to better utilize the block schedule, incorporating differentiated instruction, self-directed learning, authentic applications, and active engagement

# 4

## TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

---

### Assessment of Student Learning

---

Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Its purpose is to inform students regarding their learning progress and teachers regarding ways to adjust the curriculum and instruction to respond effectively to the learning needs of students. Further, it communicates to the school community the progress of students in achieving the school's expectations for student learning and course-specific learning goals. Assessment results must be continually discussed to improve curriculum and instruction.

1. The school shall have a process to assess school-wide and individual student progress in achieving the academic expectations in the mission based on school-wide rubrics.
2. The school's professional staff shall use data to assess the success of the school in achieving its civic and social expectations.
3. For each learning activity, teachers shall clarify to students the relevant school-wide academic expectations and course-specific learning goals that will be assessed.
4. Teachers shall base classroom assessment of student learning on school-wide and course-specific rubrics.
5. Teachers shall use varied assessment strategies to determine student knowledge, skills, and competencies and to assess student growth over time.
6. Teachers shall meet collaboratively to discuss and share student work and the results of student assessments for the purposes of revising the curriculum and improving instructional strategies.
7. The school's professional development program shall provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate in developing a broad range of student assessment strategies.
8. The school's professional staff shall communicate:
  - individual student progress in achieving school-wide academic expectations to students and their families;
  - the school's progress achieving all school-wide expectations to the school community.

## CONCLUSIONS

Nathan Hale-Ray High School has begun a process to assess school-wide and individual student progress in achieving the academic expectations in the mission based on school-wide rubrics. The faculty has developed school-wide analytical rubrics designed with four levels. The six mission-based school-wide rubrics are as follows: 1a. Reading; 1b. Writing; 1c. Speaking and Listening; 2. Problem-Solve Effectively; 3. Use Technology Effectively; 4. Demonstrates Creative Expression. There is a school-wide process for assessment of writing, reading, and problem-solving. The process is on-going and revisions in the process are currently under consideration. There is no systematic method for identifying, aggregating, analyzing, and reporting data in the areas of creative expression, speaking, listening, and technology. Accordingly, at this time, it is very difficult to assess student performance and progress in these areas. Thus, the school must complete its rubrics system and implement it. (self-study, panel presentations, teachers, school leadership team, instructional facilitators)

The school's professional staff has identified data in some areas to assess the success of the school in achieving its social and civic expectations. These data include, but are not limited to, drop-out rates, attendance and tardiness records, number of suspensions, awards, participation in a training program focusing on team-building, and involvement in Youth Helping Youth. There is no systematic process, however, for analyzing and using the data to promote the achievement of the social and civic expectations. This lack of a process makes it difficult to determine the level of achievement of the expectations and therefore makes it difficult to establish a plan of action to improve the achievement of the expectations. Nathan Hale-Ray High School students are very respectful and polite and exhibit excellent rapport with the faculty and staff members and administrators. Students are given independence during the day during X-period. This independence and the students' mature use of it are consistent with the stated civic and social expectations. There is a low incidence of vandalism and graffiti, reflecting the students' overall respect and sense of ownership for the school. The systematic collection and analysis of data will serve to verify more empirically how well the school achieves the social and civic expectations and will give students a clearer picture of what is expected and what they are achieving. (panel presentation, student work, teachers, instructional facilitators)

Clear and relevant school-wide academic expectations and course-specific learning goals are communicated and assessed for many learning activities. Components of Understanding by Design, including overarching and essential questions are used by some teachers. Essential questions are frequently posted on assignments and on the whiteboard in the classroom. The mission statement and learning goals are prominently displayed in almost every classroom, and expectations and learning goals are posted on Edline. However, this is not a universal practice. Some teachers point out the objective of the lesson and the applicable state standard on their assignment sheets, and the use of course syllabi, homework rubrics, and class procedures and policies is a common but not uniform practice. There is a question in many minds about the relevance of the school's one formal assessment practice, the portfolio, a required course.

The portfolio is one area that has generated diverse perceptions. Faculty members speak of the importance of reflection and their efforts to have students revise portfolio reflection pieces until they meet expectations. Students and parents reported that having students apply a formula to reflective writing reduces it to a rote exercise, undermining the value of personal reflection. Although the school community supports the portfolio procedure as it aligns with the school's mission statement, based on its current controversy, it appears that parents and students need to be informed of the value and uses of the portfolio process. Parents report that consistent expectations, structure, timelines, and communication of purpose are needed to redeem the portfolio process. As a result of the limitations of the current portfolio process, the quality and the utility of the portfolio varies among students. (Teachers, parents, students, student work, observations)

School-wide academic expectations and course-specific learning goals are communicated to students. In general, the school-wide academic expectations and the course-specific learning goals are communicated so that students understand their responsibilities and obligations in meeting these expectations and achieving the goals. (observations, self-study, student shadowing, student work, teachers, instructional facilitators)

Teachers base classroom assessment of student learning on school-wide and course-specific rubrics. The science department uses district-wide rubrics for all lab assignments, and high school teachers note that minor modifications to these rubrics are made for the middle and elementary school level. Problem-solving and creative writing rubrics are currently being reworked according to an assessment of the results of their implementation. Teachers also use rubrics to identify student strengths and weaknesses for the purposes of class placement. School-wide rubrics are used to assess each student's selection for their student portfolio. In addition to these school-wide rubrics, teachers develop their own analytical rubrics related to their course content. Rubrics are not used consistently or correctly by all teachers, however, compromising the value of these rubrics as accurate assessments of student performance. Students comment that rubrics are commonly utilized and are helpful in the completion of their work. They often refer to the rubric while working on their projects in order to make certain that all required components are completed. Because rubrics are not used consistently or correctly, however, there is no uniform performance standard across content areas. It may be necessary to provide additional professional development in the creation, use, and implementation of rubrics. (students, self-study, student work, student shadowing, facility tour)

Teachers use varied assessment strategies to determine student knowledge, skills, competencies, and to assess student growth over time. Classroom observations, panel presentations, teacher interviews, and examination of student work demonstrate that teachers use a variety of assessment strategies such as project-based learning, summative assessments, independent projects, varied tests such as essay and multiple choice, self- and peer-critique, rubric review, journaling, self-reflection, and feedback from the teacher. Technology products such as Microsoft publisher, Excel, and Microsoft Word are widely used. The technology education program has won state-wide recognition for the Electrathon project. Art exhibits are prominently displayed throughout the school. Authentic assessment

approaches are used in the agriculture department through its many landscaping projects in the community. The Cooperative Work Experience program also exposes students to authentic assessment as their actual work performance in the “real world” is assessed. It is worth noting that, as an alternative assessment strategy, the portfolio process as currently conceived does not accommodate an intensive discipline-specific compilation of student work and reflections. Discipline-specific portfolios might be viable in areas such as writing, art, floral design, business, technology education, or scientific inquiry. (observations, panel presentations, teachers, student work)

The school provides opportunities for professional development. However, these opportunities have not resulted in increased collaboration among staff members pertaining to instruction or assessment strategies or in uniform success of school improvement initiatives. Professional development has included: Understanding by Design, Curriculum Design, Using Differentiated Instruction, Teaching in a Differentiated Class, CMT/CAPT Skills Checklist, Tiered Lessons for Math Instruction, Language Skills in a Mixed Ability Class, Reaching Every Child, and a CAPT Scoring Workshop on Responding to Literature. It may be necessary to provide specific training in assessment analysis and use of data. Teachers state that funding is available to attend external professional development opportunities. Professional development must be more consistently sustained to ensure that the related competence is realized. As a result, school improvement initiatives may not be uniformly successful. There is no professional development for special education paraprofessionals. As a result, paraprofessionals may be confused about their role and function. (self-study, teachers, support staff, instructional facilitators)

The school’s professional staff communicates individual student progress in achieving school-wide academic expectations to students and their families and the school’s progress achieving all school-wide expectations to the school community. Nathan Hale-Ray High School uses Edline as a means to communicate individual student progress in achieving school-wide academic expectations to students and their families. Progress is also reported via parent-teacher conferences, progress reports and report cards. Students report that the Academic Seminar is an effective and useful means of receiving assistance and feedback. Board of education members stated that they receive a report from the superintendent on the CAPT scores, and the CAPT scores are published in the local newspapers. Parent advisory council meetings are held on a quarterly basis, and the administration provides information to the parents on a wide variety of topics related to school-wide expectations. The NHRHS newsletter and web-site are also used to disseminate information to the school community. (self-study, teachers, school leadership team, panel presentations)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. A school culture that fosters student respect, independence, and responsibility
2. The number and variety of co- and extra-curricular activities
3. The use of district-wide rubrics for science labs

4. The level of communication between school, parents, and the community
5. The use of the school's rubrics that the students understand to assess writing, reading, and problem-solving on a school-wide basis
6. The faculty's clear communication of the school's academic expectations and learning goals across the curriculum
7. The variety of assessment practices used by the faculty

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Complete the system of school-wide rubrics to identify, aggregate, analyze, and report data in the areas of creative expression, speaking, listening, and technology
2. Implement a process for the collection and analysis of data that will assess more empirically the degree to which each student and the school achieves its civic and social expectations
3. Sustain the professional development activities pertaining to assessment and other topics until the related competencies are realized
4. Implement a process among members of the school community to re-examine the rationale and improve the procedures and utility of the student portfolio program
5. Improve the portfolio process to accommodate alternative assessment of discipline-specific proficiency
6. Provide professional development to support the creation, use, and interpretation of school-wide and department-specific analytical rubrics
7. Implement scheduled, on-going collaboration among teachers for discussion of student work and assessment strategies

**COMMISSION ON  
PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

**SUPPORT STANDARDS**

---

**LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION**

---

**SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**

---

**COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR  
LEARNING**

---

# 5

## SUPPORT STANDARD

---

### Leadership and Organization

---

The way in which a school organizes learning for students, fosters leadership, and engages its members has a profound effect on teaching and learning. The professional culture of the school must be characterized by thoughtful, reflective, and constructive discourse about decision-making and practices, which supports student learning and well-being.

1. The school board and superintendent shall ensure that the principal has sufficient autonomy and decision-making authority to lead the school in achieving the mission and expectations for student learning.
2. The principal shall provide leadership in the school community by creating and maintaining a shared vision, direction, and focus for student learning.
3. Teachers as well as administrators other than the principal shall provide leadership essential to the improvement of the school.
4. The organization of the school and its educational programs shall promote the school's mission and expectations for student learning.
5. Student grouping patterns shall reflect the diversity of the student body, foster heterogeneity, reflect current research and best practices, and support the achievement of the school's mission and expectations for student learning.
6. The schedule shall be driven by the school's mission and expectations for student learning and shall support the effective implementation of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
7. Meaningful roles in the decision-making process shall be accorded to students, parents, and all members of the school staff to promote an atmosphere of participation, responsibility, and ownership.
8. Each teacher shall have a student load that enables the teacher to meet the learning needs of individual students.
9. There shall be a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult member of the school community in addition to the school guidance counselor who personalizes each student's educational experience, knows the student well, and

assists the student in achieving the school-wide expectations for student learning.

10. The professional staff shall collaborate within and across departments in support of learning for all students.
11. All school staff shall be involved in promoting the well-being and learning of students.
12. Student success shall be regularly acknowledged, celebrated, and displayed.
13. The climate of the school shall be safe, positive, respectful, and supportive, resulting in a sense of pride and ownership.
14. The school board shall support the implementation of the school's mission and expectations for student learning.

## CONCLUSIONS

The principal of Nathan Hale-Ray High School has sufficient autonomy and decision-making authority to lead the school in achieving the mission and expectations for student learning. The principal also has flexibility to develop, revise, and implement the school-wide improvement plan, and determines budgetary allocations within the school as related to curricular needs. The principal analyzes performance data to determine instructional needs and supervises teacher implementation of instruction to determine the school's achievement of the mission and expectations for student learning. The autonomy and decision-making authority of the principal at Nathan Hale-Ray High School support school improvements, modifications, and achievement of its mission and expectations for student learning. (school board, central office administrators, school leadership team, teachers)

The principal at Hale-Ray High School provides leadership in the school community by creating and maintaining a shared vision, direction, and focus for student learning. The principal, in collaboration with faculty and staff members develops the academic improvement plan, and coordinates its implementation through professional development opportunities including workshops such as the Understanding by Design model and differentiated instruction. Currently, there are several initiatives that require further development and depth, including effective use of the block schedule, the evaluation of student performance, portfolio assessment, academic seminar, application of rubrics, and data analysis. Curriculum revisions, assessment development, and classroom analysis of instructional techniques is completed by the faculty under the facilitation of the principal. Instructional facilitators work with the Nathan Hale-Ray leadership to develop and implement best practices according to current research, educational studies, and data reflection. This shared vision results in the Nathan Hale-Ray High School faculty and administration working together towards instruction and curricular improvements. (teachers, self-study, leadership committee)

Teachers and administrators other than the principal provide leadership essential to the improvement of the school. Teachers and administrators volunteer on subject area committees, mentor new faculty members, write grants, and work to align curriculum across the K-12 spectrum. They serve on the student assistance team and the principal's advisory council. They have recently functioned as co-chairs and principal members of the NEASC steering committee and as chairs of the NEASC standards committees. Teachers also serve as portfolio mentors, coaches, and advisors; they participate in educational opportunities outside the community. Instructional facilitators provide avenues of communication between faculty members and administrators within content areas. Leadership on the part of many teachers supports educational initiatives, improves school climate, and provides a voice in implementation of the school-wide improvement plan. (self-study, teachers, central office administrators, leadership team, instructional facilitators)

The organization of the school and its educational programs promotes the school's mission and expectations for student learning. A range of courses in advanced placement, accelerated, and academic core curriculum areas is supported by a variety of electives. Block scheduling allows for organization of instructional time to improve student learning and

address individual learning needs; however, conflicts in scheduling limit the availability of core and elective course selection to students. Technological resources are available but not fully implemented to support the academic expectation of effective use of technology. Some student work demonstrates only superficial achievement of the mission statement and expectations. Professional development is needed to fulfill the potential of block scheduling to increase depth of understanding and to fully support the mission and expectations for student learning. (students, observation, student shadowing, student work, panel presentation)

Student grouping patterns reflect the diversity of the student body, foster heterogeneity, reflect current research and best practices, and, in most groupings, support achievement of the school's mission statement and expectations for student learning. Courses are offered through multiple levels of instruction: academic, accelerated, and advanced placement. Students are permitted to enroll in most classes, fostering heterogeneity and reflecting current research and best practices, supporting the school's mission and expectations for student learning. (observation, student shadowing, teacher interviews)

The schedule is driven by the Nathan Hale-Ray High School's Mission and Expectations for Student Learning and in design supports the implementation of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The master schedule is based on student requests and needs. Availability of course offerings and multiple sections is limited, however, making lateral course changes difficult. Virtual High School attempts to offer a solution to limited course offerings. The curriculum has been deliberately designed and revised to support instruction for extended class time. To some degree, instruction and assessment incorporate the mission and expectations. A student-centered schedule addresses the general needs of the school but limited course availability may prevent students' specific needs from being met. (self-study, teachers, guidance, students)

There is an uneven degree of participation by students, parents, and faculty and staff members in decision-making processes. Parents express satisfaction with the level of communication in the decision-making process, but students express an interest in being more involved in the decision-making process related to school improvement and express the need to be better informed of the rationale relating to decisions that affect them. Some faculty members want to be more involved in the planning and implementation of change. Although opportunities are offered, some staff members express disappointment with their level of inclusion in decision-making and have a limited sense of ownership of the decisions made and the actions related to the decisions. The implementation of a plan to strengthen the inclusion of the students, teachers, and other staff members in the decision-making process will strengthen the ownership of decisions and will enhance the sense of community. (support staff members, teachers, students, parents)

Teachers have a student load that enables them to meet the learning needs of individual students. Some classes with a student load exceeding the school's ideal numbers are this way by design. Classrooms with specific equipment necessary to teach components of the curriculum are kept within the specifications of the classroom equipment. When necessary, the teacher makes the decision to take on additional students if it does not detract

from the learning needs of individual students already in the classes. Although some classes have a large number of students (over 24), the predominance of small class sizes at Hale-Ray High School reflects current research for students to reach high academic success and, ultimately, supports the mission statement. (teachers, self-study, teacher interviews, school leadership team)

Nathan Hale-Ray High School has a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult member of the school community in addition to the school guidance counselor who personalizes each student's educational experience, knows the student well, and assists the student in achieving the school-wide expectations for student learning. Academic Seminar classes led by faculty members, the developmental guidance curriculum, work study opportunities, individual mentorships which support staff members and the student assistance team are organized to facilitate adult connections for students in the school. Scheduled learning centers for students with identified learning needs are an additional opportunity for students to make adult connections. The conscious development of a school community where students feel safe and well-respected assists students in achieving school expectations. (self-study, teachers, students, panel presentation)

Some faculty members coordinate within a specific department; however, collaboration across departments in support of learning for all students is infrequent. Monthly content area meetings attempt to allocate time for intra-departmental collaboration; departments comprised of a single teacher have limited opportunities to collaborate with teachers within and outside of their respective disciplines about curriculum, instruction, assessment, and student achievement. Cross-curricular collaboration and collaboration within departments is voluntary, unstructured, and limited to the personal time of individual faculty members. Throughout the school, special education teachers work in collaboration with regular education teachers to review individual education plan modifications and to collaborate on specific strategies to improve educational learning opportunities for individual students. Limited collaboration affects coherence in department specific and school-wide initiatives related to teaching and learning. (teachers, central office administrators, panel presentation, school leadership team)

Nathan Hale-Ray faculty and staff members are involved in promoting the well-being and learning of students. In individual classrooms, teachers demonstrate a caring attitude for students, and the majority of the faculty is assigned to serve as academic advisors. School counselors advise students in decisions pertaining to course selection and potential college choices, and individual faculty members volunteer time on the student assistance team. Food services offer a spectrum of choices for meals. A school psychologist is available to students with specialized needs, works with 504 students, and implements testing for students who are referred by other members of the school community. Support staff members serve as mentors to individual students and in specific cases, supervise work study positions. The school nurse is available to distribute medications for students and tends to the common afflictions of a high school population. Staff involvement in promoting the well-being and learning of students creates a school community that feels safe, important, and respected. (students, teachers, school leadership team, student shadowing, support staff)

Student success is regularly acknowledged, celebrated, and displayed at Nathan Hale-Ray High School. Student work and achievements are prominently displayed throughout the school and on the campus, honor roll acknowledgements are published in the local newspaper, and the National Honor Society and the Tri-M Music Honor Society recognize student excellence. Department specific awards give recognition to individual students for achievement in a variety of areas, and annual academic and sports banquets are held to honor students. Honoring students throughout the year and displaying student work in the building creates a sense of pride and accomplishment in the student population. (students, self-study, facility tour)

The climate of Nathan Hale-Ray High School is safe, positive, respectful, and supportive, resulting in a sense of pride and ownership. Faculty, staff, and students exhibit rapport during instruction and passing time. Students appreciate the clean, bright and well-maintained facility. The school's climate fosters independence, respect, and responsibility among students as evidenced by the open school environment of X-block. The limited incidence of graffiti and vandalism is further evidence of the positive school climate. This positive climate allows students and faculty and staff members to appreciate the small, close community of the school. (students, teachers, support staff)

The school board is aware of the implementation of the school's mission and expectations for student learning. The board is active in the decisions regarding finances but limits their participation in the active development of changes and improvements within the school. As a policy-making and monitoring entity, the board takes an unobtrusive role allowing administrators and teachers to have the active roll in developing curriculum changes, participating in professional development, and collecting and disaggregating data from test scores to affect change within the school. This role supports change in the building empowering the high school stakeholders in the achievement of the mission and expectations for student learning. (school board, school leadership team, central office administrators)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The autonomy given to Nathan Ray-Hale High School administration and faculty by the school board to develop mission and expectations that impact teaching and learning
2. The principal's leadership and vision for the school
3. The level of teacher leadership and volunteerism
4. The respectful student body who are proud of the school
5. The predominance of appropriate student-teacher ratios that support the mission and expectations
6. Facilitation of multiple opportunities for student-adult connections

7. The ongoing commitment to the well-being of students by the professional and support staff
8. The student grouping practices that reflect current research and practices
9. The formal program that provides an adult member of the school community who serves to personalize each student's educational experience
10. Faculty, staff, and students who demonstrate a positive school community
11. Multiple celebrations of student achievements

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Increase formal opportunities for teachers to take an active leadership role in decisions made that impact student learning
2. Provide school-based professional development to implement and/or sustain current and planned initiatives
3. Minimize scheduling constraints which limit student choice
4. Implement opportunities for faculty collaboration within and across content areas to improve instructional, assessment, and curricular practices
5. Sustain focus and resources on currently identified initiatives before proceeding to new ones

# 6

## SUPPORT STANDARD

---

### School Resources for Learning

---

Student learning and well-being are dependent upon adequate and appropriate support programs and services. The school is responsible for providing an effective range of integrated resources to enhance and improve student learning and well-being and to support the school's mission and expectations.

#### All Student Support Services

1. The school's student support services shall be consistent with the school's mission and expectations for student learning.
2. The school shall allocate resources, programs, and services so that all students have an equal opportunity to achieve the school's expectations for student learning.
3. Student support personnel shall enhance student learning by interacting and working cooperatively with professional and other staff and by utilizing community resources to address the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of students.
4. All student support services shall be regularly evaluated and revised to support improved student learning.
5. There shall be a system for effective and ongoing communication with students, parents/guardians, and school personnel, designed to keep them informed about the types of available student support services and identified student needs.
6. Student records, including health and immunization records, shall be maintained in a confidential and secure manner consistent with federal and state law.
7. There shall be sufficient certified/licensed personnel and support staff to provide effective counseling, health, special education, and library media services.

#### Guidance Services

8. The school shall provide a full range of comprehensive guidance services, including:
  - individual and group meetings with counseling personnel;
  - personal, career, and college counseling;
  - student course selection assistance;
  - collaborative outreach to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers;
  - appropriate support in the delivery of special education services for students.

## **Health Services**

9. The school's health services shall provide:
  - preventive health services and direct intervention services;
  - appropriate referrals;
  - mandated services;
  - emergency response mechanisms;
  - ongoing student health assessments.

## **Library Information Services**

10. The library/information services program and materials shall be fully integrated into the school's curriculum and instructional program.
11. Library/information services personnel shall be knowledgeable about the curriculum and support its implementation.
12. A wide range of materials, technologies, and other library/information services that are responsive to the school's student population shall be available to students and faculty and utilized to improve teaching and learning.
13. Students, faculty, and support staff shall have regular and frequent access to library/information services, facilities, and programs as an integral part of their educational experience before, during, and after the school day.
14. The library/information services program shall foster independent inquiry by enabling students and faculty to use various school and community information resources and technologies.
15. Policies shall be in place for the selection and removal of information resources and the use of technologies and the Internet.

## **Special Education Services**

16. The school shall provide special education services related to the identification, monitoring, and referral of students in accordance with local, state, and federal laws

## CONCLUSIONS

The school's student support services are consistent with the school's mission and expectations for student learning. Nathan Hale-Ray High School student support personnel embrace the school's mission and expectations for student learning. School counselors work with staff, parents, and students to help students meet identified learning expectations. The developmental guidance program includes individual and group meetings centered on career planning and college selection. The program offers assistance to parents in the financial aid procedures and the college application process. Counseling and health services support the physical, social and emotional needs of each student. The school nurse is a contributing member on the student assistance team (SAT). The comprehensive guidance, health, and psychological services are effective in supporting student learning. School resources support the mission and expectations. (self-study, parents, teachers, students, counselors, health services personnel)

Nathan Hale-Ray High School allocates resources, programs, and services so students have an opportunity to achieve the school's expectations for student learning. The school makes a concerted effort to engage students in the educational programs and services of Nathan Hale-Ray High School. Students are responsible for the selection of their courses based on their abilities, interests, and long-term goals and teacher recommendations. Parents and students may override a teacher recommendation allowing "open" course enrollment including AP courses. Students receiving special education resource room support are able to take regular education courses in addition to resource support classes. Students meet academic, social, and civic expectations through participation in varied programs, and activities including, but not limited to, Project WISE, Tech-Prep, distance learning, television production, and agricultural science programs, cooperative work experience and work study. Students engage in civic and social activities such as Straight from the Heart, Multi-Cultural Club, National Honor Society, FFA, Little Noises Spirit Club, Tri-M Honor Society, and Youth Helping Youth. The nurse, health teacher, and physical education teacher help students to demonstrate skills and behaviors necessary for lifetime physical wellness by teaching them to be responsible for their health, well-being, and decision-making. A school resource officer (state trooper), a social worker from East Haddam's Youth and Family Service Bureau, and a substance abuse counselor are available to meet the social and emotional needs of students. There is a limited number of paraprofessionals available to support the success of students with identified needs in general education classes. School resources have been allocated in a way that makes learning available to students and, therefore, supports the key elements of the mission and expectations for student learning. However, it is not clear from the evidence provided that analysis has been conducted to determine the impact of the small number of paraprofessionals on educational programs. (student shadowing, school support staff, facility tour, teachers, self-study, program of studies)

Student support personnel enhance student learning by interacting and working with professionals and other staff members and by utilizing community resources to address the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of students. The nurse addresses daily health issues and provides various health services for individual students. She enjoys a close

working relationship with the school psychologist, social worker, and guidance counselors. The library media specialist collaborates with other staff members and supervises a computer lab with 18 computers open for class or individual student access during X-block and for Virtual High School. The library also offers students diverse learning media including texts, trade books, large print texts, audio books, reference volumes, videos, periodicals, online databases, and online access to texts. The media center is open to teachers and their classes during regular class periods and to individual students during X-block. The special education department embraces the collaborative/consultation model even though meetings between special education and mainstream teachers are limited by schedule constraints. However, both mainstream and special education teachers make an effort to communicate about student needs and related instruction, and to share projects. The student assistance team (SAT) is comprised of the principal, the assistant principal, director of special education, the two guidance counselors, school psychologist, the school nurse, the school resource officer, a social worker from Youth and Family Services, and teacher volunteers. The team develops and implements intervention strategies to address the social, emotional, and physical needs of students. A working relationship among all members of the school resources team creates a learning environment where students have the tools for success available to them; however, collaboration is sometimes hindered by scheduling restraints. (school support staff, teachers, self-study)

Student support services are regularly evaluated and revised to support improved student learning. The counselors solicit feedback through surveys on programs such as NHRHS Orientation Night, junior class parent night, senior planning night, and financial aid night. Data from the surveys are used to improve presentations and services. Technology and media services have an ongoing, five-year plan for the replacement of computers and print materials. The library media specialist surveys teachers about materials and services. Student support personnel are evaluated through the district-wide evaluation program in which the individual establishes yearly goals for themselves and their programs. Health services maintain comprehensive records and are receptive to feedback from students and parents. The review and revision of support services result in an efficient delivery of most curricula and services. (school support staff, self-study, facility tour)

There is a system for effective and ongoing communication with students, parents/guardians, and school personnel designed to keep them informed about the types of available student support services and about students with identified needs. Communications with students, parents, and school personnel are accomplished through the student handbook, the principal's quarterly newsletter, PPT/504 processes, memos, e-mails, Edline, miscellaneous mailings, phone calls, faculty meetings, parent meetings, morning announcements, and student assemblies. Students and families are kept informed about student support services and school news. (observation, parents, students, self-study)

Student records, including student health and immunization records, are maintained in a confidential and secure manner consistent with federal and state law. Medical information is secured in confidential student folders that are kept locked in the fire-proof confidential files in the nurse's office. Notification to faculty members regarding the medical needs of identified students is accomplished with a health alert communication distributed in hard

copy within the first two weeks of school and redistributed during semester change. Transcripts, grade reports, standardized test results, anecdotal reports, and other student information is securely and confidentially maintained in fire-proof cabinets. All confidential special education records are locked in secured files with access restricted according to federal and state laws. Essential medically related information is not shared in a timely manner with all staff members who have a legitimate educational need to know. Confidential school records are safe and secure, but it would be beneficial to provide periodic professional development pertaining to the protocol for sharing confidential student information. (self-study, guidance, nurse, special education director)

There are sufficient certified/licensed personnel and support staff members to provide effective counseling, health, special education, and library media services. There are two school guidance counselors for approximately 387 students. There is one full-time nurse, one library media specialist, one full-time paraprofessional in the library, four special education teachers, three special education paraprofessionals within the special education department, and one school psychologist who also has responsibilities at the elementary school. The nurse sees between 40 - 50 students per day, but she does not have clerical assistance. The special education department and the guidance department both have full-time secretaries. The district technology specialist works in all three schools in the school district. She is supported by a full-time computer network administrator. The number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff members are adequate to deliver services. (self-study, school support staff, school nurse)

The school provides a full range of comprehensive guidance services, including individual and group meetings with counseling personnel; personal, career, and college counseling; student course selection assistance; collaborative outreach to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers; and appropriate support in the delivery of special education services for students. The academic seminar classes are utilized to deliver diverse developmental guidance. Presentations to parents are held at each grade level aimed at specific topics of interest, for example, assistance with financial aid in the eleventh grade and the college application process in the twelfth grade. School counselors attend 504 and PPT meetings to discuss course selections and to participate in the development of individual education plans for special education students, including the development of the individual transition plans. CAPT and PSAT scores are used to identify students who may be underachieving. Students who score high on the PSAT are encouraged to consider taking AP courses. The school psychologist is responsible to provide individual counseling to special education students who have need for social and/or emotional support student counseling, and the school support staff utilizes community resources by referring students and families to youth and family service area treatment centers, private counseling, and the school's SAT. The Nathan Hale-Ray High School guidance department provides a full range of comprehensive services to assist students in meeting the expectations expressed in the mission statement. (school support staff, parents, guidance, self-study)

The school nurse provides preventive and responsive health services such as referrals, mandated services, emergency response, and on-going health assessments as represented in the emergency management handbook and faculty handbook. These handbooks address

emergency procedures regarding school evacuations, intruders, earthquakes, bomb threats, hostage situations, weapons, hazardous materials, fire, crisis intervention, terrorist event, suicide prevention, and lock-down plans. The nurse makes an annual presentation to the staff demonstrating the proper handling of blood-borne pathogens. The nurse maintains sport physical records and the assembly of medical kits and supplies for field trips and school events. The nurse serves on the student assistance team (SAT) responsible for providing crisis intervention. Teachers and staff members refer students directly in written or verbal form to the student assistance team. Faculty and students at Nathan Hale-Ray High School are supported by the school's health program, resulting in a secure and safe environment. (self-study, school support staff, paraprofessionals, faculty members, emergency management handbooks)

The library/information services program and materials is not fully integrated into the school's curriculum and instructional program. The library media specialist involves teachers in acquisition of materials to support the curriculum. Information is updated and revised in order to align with curricular needs. The school library media specialist demonstrates knowledge of the curriculum as she provides appropriate materials upon teacher request. Teachers engage in both conversation and planning with the library personnel in conjunction with special projects. Student access to the media center is limited as a result of guidelines set by the library/media specialist. Individual students do not have access to the library before or after school or for individual work during scheduled class time; however, entire classes may have access to the library only when accompanied by the classroom teacher. Although the collection includes up-to-date materials, the amount of time available to students for library use is restricted, impeding the achievement of learning expectations. (self-study, librarian, teachers, students, facility tour)

Library/information services personnel are knowledgeable about the curriculum but provide limited support for its implementation. The library media specialist has served on the district curriculum council for four years. The library media specialist also attends the monthly meeting of the language arts curriculum or receives minutes from these meetings. The library media specialist works with classroom teachers to help students access resources, often traveling to the state library to secure materials to support the curriculum. The media specialist oversees the television studio and computer lab used for VHS. The library/media specialist is knowledgeable about curriculum. The acquisition of materials facilitates the delivery of instruction. (self-study, teachers, library media specialist)

A wide range of materials, technologies, and other library/information services that are responsive to the school's student population is available but can not be freely accessed by members of the learning community. The library has a variety of materials, technologies, and other library resource materials including print media in book and magazines format, computer labs, two portable laptop carts, projectors in classrooms, television studio, and access to state library resources. In addition to print selections, there are non-print resources such as computer software, CDs, DVDs, VHS tapes, and Internet access. Links to numerous database sources are available for school or home use on the library website and Edline. These resources and services are not available to individual students before school hours, during class periods, or after school hours, resulting in undue limitations on the student's

ability to fulfill the stated learning expectations. (self-study, students, parents, teachers, support staff)

Students, faculty members, and support staff members do not have regular and frequent access to information services, facilities, and programs as an integral part of their educational experience before, during, and after the school day. Teachers bring students to the library and computer labs through a sign-up procedure. One class at a time may sign up for the computer lab and the two computer carts. Students are allowed access to the library only during X-block or when accompanied by a classroom teacher, therefore individual students and small groups of students are not permitted to use the library independently unless accompanied by a teacher. Also, students and faculty and support staff members have no access to the library before or after school. The restricted availability of the media center does not fully support the mission of Nathan Hale-Ray High School. (observations, school support staff, facility tour)

The library/information services program does not foster independent inquiry by enabling students and faculty members to use various school and community information resources and technologies. Students are taught the research skills necessary to access and effectively use information from a variety of sources. The skills, including Boolean Searching, online information sources, and accessing Internet sources, are taught to classes in the library media center by the classroom teacher with the assistance of the media specialist through research assignments. Students participate in independent inquiry through the WISE program and the Senior Experience Initiative. At the current level of access, the library media center does not foster independent inquiry for the majority of students. (school support staff, teachers, students, self-study)

Policies are in place for the selection and removal of information resources and the use of technologies and the Internet. The board of education adopted written policies for the selection and removal of library materials and equipment. The policy delineates the process for removal of the out-of-date, infrequently used, and/or challenged resources. The technology governing board has developed rules for computer and Internet use. Both students and parents sign the policy for technology use as an "Internet Access Conduct Agreement." Student achievement and safety are facilitated by these comprehensive policies. (self-study, school support staff, library media specialist, school documents)

The school provides special education services related to the identification, monitoring, and referral of students in accordance with local, state, and federal laws. A student assistance team (SAT) serves as a pre-referral to a planning and placement team (PPT) meeting and establishes strategies to facilitate successful completion of mainstream classes. A student may be referred for testing to determine appropriate placement and whether special education intervention is needed. If needed, support is offered in the least restrictive environment. Mainstreaming students with special needs is the preferred form of service delivery. Students with unique learning needs are provided with small settings within the resource room. A small number of students unable to succeed in the traditional high school setting is out-placed. Student progress is monitored by special education case managers, IEP progress reports, progress reports, and report cards. Parents are notified of

their procedural safeguard rights and services at PPT meetings. Nathan Hale-Ray High School provides instruction in the least restrictive environment; special education staff members communicate with regular education teachers, team-teach classes, and meet with the school nurse and guidance personnel in order to address the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of the students. (self-study, director of special education, guidance)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The variety of co-curricular student activities available to engage students
2. Myriad of support services
3. The introduction of developmental guidance curriculum
4. The open course enrollment procedures that foster increased opportunities that challenge students
5. The employment of a full-time network administrator and full-time district technology specialist
6. The ongoing evaluation of student support services
7. The current staffing levels which provide a full range of student support services
8. The effective partnerships with community agencies
9. The variety of resources, including technology, in the media center

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Improve the delivery of support services for students with identified needs
2. Immediately eliminate restrictions that limit student access to the library/media center
3. Implement library/media curriculum in alignment with the school's curriculum and mission and expectations
4. Provide periodic professional development regarding the distribution of confidential information pertaining to students
5. Provide computer software and related professional development to facilitate the completion of clerical tasks by the nurse

# 7

## SUPPORT STANDARD

---

### Community Resources for Learning

---

Active community and parent participation, facilities which support school programs and services, and dependable and adequate funding are necessary for the school to achieve its mission and expectations for student learning.

1. The school shall engage parents and families as partners in each student's education and shall encourage their participation in school programs and parent support groups.
2. The school shall foster productive business/community/higher education partnerships that support student learning.
3. The school site and plant shall support and enhance all aspects of the educational program and the support services for student learning.
4. The physical plant and facilities shall meet all applicable federal and state laws and shall be in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations.
5. Equipment shall be adequate, properly maintained, catalogued, and replaced when appropriate.
6. A planned and adequately funded program of building and site management shall ensure the appropriate maintenance, repair, and cleanliness of the school plant.
7. There shall be ongoing planning to address future programs, enrollment changes, staffing, facility, and technology needs as well as capital improvements.
8. The community and the district's governing body shall ensure an adequate and dependable source of revenue to provide and maintain appropriate school programs, personnel, services, facilities, equipment, technological support, materials, and supplies for student learning.
9. Faculty and building administrators shall have active involvement in the budgetary process, including its development and implementation.

## CONCLUSIONS

Nathan Hale-Ray High School actively engages students and their families as partners in the students' education. It provides such opportunities as open houses, career nights, booster clubs, award banquets, WISE presentations, and freshman orientations. Communication among parents, teachers, and students is achieved through the use of parent/teacher conferences, mid-quarter progress reports, and the use of Edline, a web-based portal allowing students and parents the ability to view information posted by the school office, teachers, coaches and club advisors. Parent involvement is encouraged through the high school principal advisory council, parental forums, and after school activities. Edline has also provided opportunities for parents to be more involved in their student's education. The Edline site offers web pages for each course that includes a course or unit syllabus, class expectations, assignments, and due dates. Parents are encouraged to visit and invited into the classrooms as speakers through a Junior Achievement program entitled Globe. These efforts result in open communication and a supportive, family-like atmosphere that fosters a partnership in education for parents, students, and school community members. (administrators, faculty and staff members, students, parents, self-study, web site)

The school fosters business, community, and higher education partnerships that support student learning. There are several co-curricular and work place programs that are available to the students such as work study, cooperative work experience (CWE), and the FFA's supervised agricultural experience (SAE). The local business and community members are supportive of the school both financially and academically. Through the dedication of the business community, the school has been able to enhance and expand programs, facilities and opportunities for students (installation of lights on the soccer field, supplies to support the Electrathon Project, and scholarship support). The school is connected to the higher education community through several programs such as Tech Prep with Middlesex Community College, Agri-Science with Radcliffe Hicks at the University of Connecticut and partnership programs with Wesleyan University and Middlesex Community College. The students are active in the community through working at the senior center, the Youth and Family Center, and working in the community through job placements. These opportunities offer students authentic learning experiences that support and enhance their curricular work and allow them to make better-informed post secondary education decisions. (faculty, staff, students, parents, student work, self-study)

Nathan Hale-Ray High School, built in 1994, is a clean, attractive, and well-maintained facility; however, there are concerns regarding the building's size and ability to support its educational programs. The current enrollment of 387 students has surpassed the district's projection of 366 students for the 2006-2007 school year. Student enrollment may soon exceed the building's capacity of 400. Music, science, and library/media are particular areas of concern. Storage space is limited throughout the building. The cafeteria is able to seat less than half of the student body during the school's one lunch wave. Without consideration of the building's storage and space limitations, educational programs and support services may be compromised if enrollment continues to grow. (faculty and staff members, students, maintenance schedule, self-study, enrollment data)

Evidence collected during the visit indicates that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. The building principal conducts a bi-weekly walk-through with the building supervisor as well as a monthly walk-through with the district's business manager and maintenance supervisor to note any areas of concern. The entire school is handicapped accessible. The school plant and facilities are on a planned, ongoing maintenance and replacement schedule. The budget is adequate to maintain equipment, supplies, and maintenance staff. The heating systems are automated and can be accessed by the maintenance supervisor from a remote location. The maintenance department is sufficiently staffed. Safety issues that pertain to chemicals and the maintenance of fire extinguishers are maintained through a contracted service. Maintenance requests are addressed in a timely fashion. The school is a clean, safe environment that is conducive to student learning. (administrators, faculty and staff members, maintenance schedule, self-study)

Equipment in the high school is adequate, properly maintained, catalogued, and replaced when appropriate. Equipment is on a five-year ongoing replacement schedule. The district has a three-year, board-approved technology plan which includes the replacement of older computers and related technology equipment. The high school employs a full-time person to maintain computer equipment. The district's maintenance supervisor and the building supervisor maintain and monitor the school's non-instructional equipment. Furniture that dates to the opening of the school is on a three-year replacement plan. Each summer, media equipment is either serviced or replaced. The Frederick Ray Foundation, a local endowment specifically for Nathan Hale-Ray High School, provides funding for equipment and technology. These efforts have provided the students with current technology and equipment that encourages and enhances teaching and learning. (technology plan, district budget, self-study, administrators)

Nathan Hale-Ray High School provides an adequately funded program for building and site management that ensures maintenance, repair, and cleanliness of the building. The district's maintenance supervisor and building supervisor oversee the purchasing of supplies, materials and equipment, and the hiring and training of maintenance personnel. The maintenance department is sufficiently staffed, including one building supervisor, three full-time custodians, and one part-time custodian. Building improvements are included in the district budget. A planned maintenance and replacement schedule is being developed. These efforts have provided the students, staff, and administration with a clean, safe, and attractive school which is conducive to a positive learning environment. (maintenance staff, administrators, self-study, maintenance schedule)

The school has an ongoing plan to address future programs, enrollment changes, staffing, facility, technology, and capital improvements. Beginning in 2000, a twelve person planning team has revised the mission and identified district goals and objectives. Student achievement and facility needs have been identified as priorities at the high school. The district's long-range school facilities plan is updated annually and identifies long-range building needs. Student enrollment is reviewed by administration annually to determine staffing and program needs. Enrollment figures are tracked with the Rediker's

Administrator's Plus record keeping software. A three-year technology plan is in place, projecting technology needs and estimating future costs. The faculty meets with the administration for input on the master schedule. As a result of these planning tools and initiatives, future programs and staffing needs are addressed. (self-study, faculty and staff members, long-range school facilities plan)

The school budget is generally viewed by the public as fiscally responsible. The board of education and the board of finance have a close working relationship that results in the harmonious development of the budget. School revenues are supplemented through the A. E. Purple Fund and the Frederick Ray Foundation. The Ray Foundation continues to make significant contributions to the school's programs, services, and equipment. The business community supports the school through donation of supplies, facilities for CWE, mentoring, and in-kind services. Both the board of education and the board of finance face, however, current and future challenges including but not limited to adequate elective courses, remedial assistance, staffing, and school facilities. (budget, faculty and staff members, administrators, self-study)

The building administration is actively involved in the budget process, its development, and its implementation. The budget process begins at the central office, and instructions are disseminated to the building principals. Teachers develop budget requests and priorities are determined through a needs assessment developed by the building principal. Budgets are supplemented through state and federal grants, local endowment funds, and community contributions. Purchase orders and supply requisitions are processed in a timely fashion. Faculty members contribute input into the creation of the school budget to determine program and student needs. Faculty members agree that they are rarely denied supplies or other requested teaching materials and equipment. This design for the budget process is adequate to provide for instructional requirements, but feedback to the faculty and staff members related to budget decisions is not comprehensive. (self-study, teachers, staff members, administrators, budget)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The implementation of the Edline web-based portal that allows for effective and ongoing communication between parents, students, and teachers
2. The business community's financial support of school programs and services that enhances student learning experiences and enriches student participation in extra and co-curricular activities
3. The school college partnerships that provide the students with opportunities to link to post secondary education
4. The clean and well-maintained physical plant and facilities
5. Wide range of technology and equipment that is continually serviced and replaced on schedule

6. The Frederick Ray Foundation which has given outstanding continued financial support

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Implement a plan to address the current needs for storage space
2. Improve avenues for feedback to faculty and staff members during the budget development and implementation process
3. Ensure fiscal support to address current and future challenges including but not limited to adequate elective courses, remedial assistance, staffing, and school facilities

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

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

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

To ensure that it has current information about the school, the Commission has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Commission within sixty (60) days of occurrence any substantive change which negatively impacts the school's adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The report of substantive change must describe the change itself and detail any impact which the change has had on the school's ability to meet CPSS Standards. The Commission's Substantive Change Policy is included in the Appendix on page 69. All other substantive changes should be included in the Two- and Five-Year Progress Reports and/or the Annual Report which is required of each member school to ensure that the Commission office has current statistical data on the school.

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

In closing, the visiting committee wishes to express its appreciation to the students, parents, administration, faculty, and support staff of Nathan Hale-Ray High School for their hospitality and assistance during our visit to the school. The planning prior to the visit and the attention to details that supported the visiting teams daily work, inquiry, and personal

comfort were much appreciated. Because of this preparation, planning, and support, the visiting committee enjoyed a truly professional experience and found the meetings and discussions to be both valuable and beneficial in the process of the evaluation.

**Appendix A: Roster of Team Members**  
**Nathan Hale-Ray High School**

**David A. Sweet, Chair**

Scituate Middle / High School  
N. Scituate, RI 02857

**Allen Fossbender, Assistant Chair**

Easton, Reading, and Region 9  
Monroe, CT 06468

**Katherine DeNyse**

Ponaganset High School  
N. Scituate, RI 02857

**Rufus DeRham**

Hoosatic Valley Regional High School  
Falls Village, CT 06031

**Miguel Garcia**

Lyman Memorial High School  
Lebanon, CT 06249

**Ann R. Gaulin**

Connecticut State Department of Education  
Hartford, CT 06106

**Meghan M. Hudson**

Joseph E. Foran High School  
Milford, CT 06460

**David P. Hunter**

Cheshire High School  
Cheshire, CT 06410

**Francis T. Kennedy**

Stafford High School  
Stafford Springs, CT 06076

**Joseph C. Musumeci**

Killingly High School  
Danielson, CT 06239

**James O'Brien**

The Morgan School  
Clinton, CT 06413

**Marilyn Pond**

Thomaston High School  
Thomaston, CT 06787

**Joyce Stashenko**

Granby Memorial High Schools  
Granby, CT 06035

**Patricia Sullivan**

East Granby Public Schools  
East Granby, CT 06026

**Anita Ward**

North Branford High School  
North Branford, CT 06471

**Colleen Wilber**

Griswold High School  
Griswold, CT 06351

## **Appendix B:**

### ***NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES***

#### **Commission on Public Secondary Schools**

#### **SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY**

Principals of member schools must report to the Commission within sixty (60) days of occurrence any substantive change in the school which has negative impact on the school's ability to meet any of the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The report of substantive change must describe the change itself as well as detail the impact of the change on the quality of education in the school. Examples of substantive change areas include:

- available programs, including fine arts, practical arts, and student activities
- available facilities, including upkeep and maintenance
- level of funding
- school day and/or school year
- administrative structure, including the number of administrators and supervisors
- number of teachers and/or guidance counselors
- number of support staff
- student services
- educational media services and personnel
- student enrollment
- grades served by the school
- the student population that causes program or staffing modifications(s): e.g. the number of special needs students or vocational students or students with limited English proficiency
- identification by state as an under-performing school
- takeover by the state
- inordinate user fees