

**New England Association of  
Schools and Colleges**



**Commission on Public Secondary Schools**

**Report of the Visiting Committee for  
Guilford High School**

**Guilford High School  
Guilford, Connecticut  
October 2010**

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

The prime concern of the visiting committee has been to assess the quality of the educational program at Guilford 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.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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

The Governing body of the Association is its Board of Trustees which supervises the work of six commissions: the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE), the Commission on Independent Schools (CIS), the Commission on Public Secondary Schools (CPSS), the Commissions 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 school 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 Guilford High School, a committee of eleven 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, self-study committees involved representatives from all stakeholders – students, parents, and district office personnel.

The self-study of Guilford High School extended over a period of 18 months from November 2009 to May 2010. The visiting committee was pleased to note that students, parents, and central office personnel joined the professional staff in the self-study deliberations.

Public schools evaluated by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools must complete appropriate materials to assess their adherence to the Standards for Accreditation and the quality of their educational offerings in light of the school's mission, learning expectations, and unique student population. In addition to using the Self-Study Guides developed by a representative group of New England educators and approved by the Commission, Guilford High School also used questionnaires developed by 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 fifteen evaluators was assigned by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate Guilford High School. The Committee members spent four days in Guilford, 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, and central office administrators, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Guilford High School.

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 52 hours of shadowing 14 students for a half day
- a total of 20 hours for classroom observations (in addition to time shadowing students)
- numerous informal observations in and around the school
- tours of the facility
- individual meetings with 30 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 accreditation of Guilford High School.

### **Overview of Findings**

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

Guilford High School used the self-study process in its review of the programs and services it provides for students. The visiting committee found that many of the school's strengths and needs as identified in the self-study documents are also identified in the visiting committee report along with additional observations. It is our hope that the commendations and recommendations found in this report will serve as the basis of a continuous improvement plan that will address needed changes in programs, services, and facilities provided to the students of Guilford High School.

Guilford High School students and their parents express their appreciation for the efforts of the faculty members and administrators to provide a comprehensive program of studies and support services that meet student needs and interests. Students express their pride in the school and state that Guilford High is a great place to make friends and prepare for the challenges of life after high school. Many students are aware of the mission statement's emphasis on creating a "rigorous, safe, and respectful environment," and they believe that GHS has taken steps to ensure that the school is a safe and respectful environment that offers rigorous courses and student activities that engage students in the life of the school. Students also acknowledge that their teachers are concerned about their success and are willing to provide assistance during and after school hours. Guilford High School offers a comprehensive curriculum designed to meet student needs and interests and has eliminated the lowest level of classes in order to increase the challenges for all students. GHS teachers consistently draw from their subject area expertise, and they employ a variety of instructional strategies to engage their students in classroom activities. Since the final approval of the mission and expectations for student learning in December of 2009, teachers have posted both the mission statement and expectations for student learning and the principles of learning adopted by the district to focus everyone on the school's values and beliefs about student learning. Students are confused at times by the

difference between the principles of learning and the academic expectations, and because GHS is still in the initial stages of applying the school-wide rubrics, not all teachers yet explain to their classes how the classroom activities and assessments they employ provide students with opportunities to prove their achievement of the academic expectations. Teachers have practiced the assessment of student work through use of the school-wide rubrics that faculty members designed to measure the academic expectations, but more time will be needed to ensure that use of these rubrics is consistent across the school.

## **Teaching and Learning at Guilford High School**

Student success is the focus of everyone in the Guilford High School community. Because of the efforts of the faculty and staff members and the support of students' families, a supportive environment for learning flourishes at GHS. The efforts of the school to improve student performance have been evident in recent years and GHS is pleased that the Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now ( CONNCAN) recently ranked the school as 8<sup>th</sup> in the state when it comes to meeting state goals across all subjects tested by CAPT. The school has made efforts across the curriculum to increase student engagement and to ensure rigor in all classes. More effort needs to be made to continue these efforts and to clarify for all members of the school community what "rigor" entails. Not all students feel they are being challenged and some classes are not conducted in a manner that meets all learning styles or interests. While many teachers design activities that help to personalize instruction, traditional approaches to instruction do remain in some classes.

Guilford High School offers a comprehensive co-curricular program that affords student opportunities for leadership, community service, and an expansion of talents and interests. Students enjoy classes that offer real life, authentic learning experiences as well as opportunities to expand their learning experiences through activities, courses outside of the school campus and school day, and the capstone project through which students may demonstrate not only what they have learned but also how they are able to integrate their knowledge and skills. Student achievements are acknowledged and celebrated in the school community with daily announcements, award ceremonies, and displays of student work and awards.

The process that Guilford High School used in the development of the mission statement and expectations was thoughtful and inclusive. Students, parents, and faculty members agree that the mission reflects the values and beliefs of the community about teaching and learning. The mission and expectations are published in school documents, emphasized through morning announcements, and posted in classrooms and common areas. However, greater emphasis needs to be given to the importance of the academic expectations and the school-wide rubrics as measures of student success. Aligning the curriculum with the academic expectations and modifying the contents of curriculum documents across all subject areas will assist teachers in their planning for instruction. GHS teachers and students benefit from the professional learning communities wherein teachers review assessments, curriculum, and instructional strategies during common planning time. Increased time for these PLC meetings and expansion to include more discussion of successful instructional strategies and interdisciplinary activities will benefit student learning.

## **Support of Teaching and Learning at Guilford High School**

At Guilford High School, class sizes, manageable teaching loads, and the number of student activities permit teachers and support staff members to pay individual attention to students. However, a more formal advisory or mentoring program for all students would allow the school to assess the personalization of the students' experiences with greater reliability than the mostly informal connections formed between students and adults at GHS. Students, parents, and most faculty members also appreciate the support for learning provided through the new schedule that provides a guaranteed lunch period for all students. The GHS principal is recognized as a strong leader with a clear vision for the school. His communication with the school community has been frequent and positive, and he is highly visible and open to discussion about the school and its programs. Other administrators and faculty members have opportunities to provide leadership for the school through a variety of committees and activities. Faculty members have a voice in the creation of the school budget and agree that the Guilford Board of Education supports the learning needs of GHS students, providing them with materials, equipment, supplies, and support programs through department and school-wide budgets. The creation of a faculty advisory council, currently under discussion, will provide faculty members with an additional vehicle for review of issues that arise concerning the needs of students and teachers.

Guilford High School has programs and services in place to assist students who need additional support in their efforts to achieve the expectations for learning or who have personal or medical issues that can be addressed within the school or the greater Guilford community. Guidance counselors have manageable student loads, and the student assistance center provides students with the support of the deans in addition to special education teachers, school psychologists, and social workers. The library-media center has a knowledgeable library/media specialist who supports student learning. The library/media center provides students with Internet access and other technological equipment in addition to print materials. GHS students who may need additional support are identified through a referral process for special education services or a 504 plan. Teachers provide help both during and after school, and many serve as coaches or advisors to clubs and activities. Student achievement is celebrated throughout the school, and parents are apprised of important news or announcements concerning activities and events through many modes of communication.

Guilford High School is a warm and welcoming school with administrators, faculty and staff members, and parents who work diligently to create the optimum environment for learning. However, the physical plant is not capable of meeting the many and diverse needs of students. As GHS prepares students for the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the short-comings of the physical plant will become even more challenging. Administrators, teachers, support personnel, and the maintenance staff have collaborated to develop strategies to make the best of the facility's short-comings and find creative strategies to meet demands; however, they have exhausted all the alternatives possible. If Guilford High School is to meet its mission, the issues regarding the physical plant's short-comings must be addressed. With continued strong leadership, community support, a shared vision, a willingness to embrace change, and careful

planning, GHS should achieve its mission and ensure that it is well able to achieve its expectations and prepare students for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## **SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PROFILE**

### **The Community**

Guilford High School is located in Guilford, Connecticut. The town, founded in 1639, is the seventh oldest township in Connecticut. It is bordered by Branford to the west and Madison to the east, Durham to the north and Long Island Sound to the south. Guilford is a suburb of the city of New Haven. With a population of 22,327, the town is five miles in breadth and twelve miles in length. Its 47.6 square miles make it the second largest town by area in the state. Guilford is a thriving suburban community, with a great deal of respect for its past as well as high expectations for the future. The town green is the heart of the community, surrounded by local businesses, a newly renovated public library, several churches and community areas such as the Guilford Fair Grounds that host numerous events.

With proximity to Route 1 and Interstate 95, New York City and Boston are easily accessible from Guilford, as well as more local cities such as New Haven and Hartford. The leading employers in Guilford are companies and organizations such as the VNA Community Healthcare, Big Y Foods, Yale-New Haven Shoreline Medical Center and Moroso Performance Products. Established local businesses such as Guilford Savings Bank, Page's Hardware and Appliance Company, and Bishop's Orchards Farm Markets are cornerstones of the local economy.

The median household income for Guilford is \$95,326, as compared to the state average of \$65,859. Many of our town residents have completed higher levels of education, with 50% holding a bachelors degree or more. According to October, 2008 data, the unemployment rate was 4.4% and the percentage of families living below the poverty level in Guilford was 3.1.

Enrollment data indicate a district enrollment of 3,822 students with the per pupil expenditure at \$11, 884; this compared to the state average of \$12,151. Ninety-one percent of the school's funds are obtained through local resources and 9.04% are obtained from the state. Sixty-three percent of the local property tax in Guilford is allocated to the school district.

Of the 3,822 students in district, 1,136 students attend Guilford High School. Enrollment in Adams and Baldwin Middle Schools is 603 and 574 respectively. There are four elementary schools located throughout the town: Melissa Jones School with 357 students, Guilford Lakes School with 438 students, A.W. Cox School with 319 students and Calvin Leete School with 335 students. Two percent of high school age students attend non-public schools. English is not the primary language for forty-two students in the Guilford School District. Some of the languages spoken are Spanish, Arabic, Russian, Chinese, Portuguese, Vietnamese, and French.

### **The School and Students**

Guilford High School is a four year comprehensive public high school that offers a diverse educational program to its students. The student body consists of 540 males and 596 females. Enrollment numbers at Guilford High School have remained consistent over the past ten years. In addition to those students enrolled here, there are 38 students who attend various out of

district facilities. These include: special education private placements (17 students), special education public placements (five students), magnet schools (one student), Vocational-Agricultural (Vo-Ag) schools and special programs offered by other Connecticut public schools. (15 students) The number of these outside placements has been consistent over the past three years. The ethnic, racial, and cultural composition has remained constant with 93.2% Caucasian students, 2.8% Asian American, 2.7% Hispanic, and 1.3% African American. The average drop-out rate for the past two years has been 0.4% compared to a state average of 1.7%. The average daily student attendance for males is 95.5% and for females 96.2%. The average attendance rate among teachers over the past two years was 91.5%.

There are 86 teachers at Guilford High School, with a student-teacher ratio of 14:1. The average class size is 18.9 students. Guilford High School runs an eight period schedule, six of which meet each day. In a four day cycle, each class meets three times. This schedule allows for 57 minutes per instructional period. Each student is afforded a 30 minute lunch and the opportunity to carry up to eight classes a semester. Common planning time for subject specific Professional Learning Communities for some departments is incorporated in the master schedule. This time provides the opportunity to assess curriculum, discuss student work, plan assessments, and analyze student achievement data to best meet the needs of the students. Students attend school for 180 days and 1,002 hours, exceeding the state mandate of 900 hours. The school year for faculty is 185 days.

Grade nine students are enrolled in heterogeneous classes for English, social studies, world languages and Algebra I, while they are leveled in their science and advanced math courses. In grades 10-12, core subject courses are typically offered at four levels: advanced placement, honors, level one and level two. Most elective courses outside the core subject offerings are designated a level of zero, one, or two. Beginning with the 2008-2009 school year, additional team teaching classes have been offered as level three courses are phased out. With this model, regular and special education teachers co-teach to meet the diverse needs of our students in select math, science, English, and social studies courses. Approximately 9.1% of the student population receives special education services and 0.6% of students receive ELL support services. All students are required to take four credits of English as well as three credits of social studies, mathematics and science. One credit in arts or vocational education is required, as well as two credits of physical education/health. Students must complete a minimum of twenty hours of community service prior to graduation as well as demonstrate proficiency on all areas of the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT).

Students at Guilford High School are acknowledged in numerous ways for their accomplishments. Two awards nights, one for underclassmen and one for seniors, are scheduled annually to honor student achievement. The National Honor Society, Spanish Honor Society, French Honor Society, Latin Honor Society, and the International Thespian Honor Society host inductions and the athletic department organizes and hosts an awards banquet for all athletes. The art department organizes expositions throughout the year both in the school and within the community. Seniors organize their own culminating showcases. Students within the arts have been recognized on both a state and national level. The music department celebrates student accomplishments with many performances throughout the year, including performances at a variety of different venues along the East coast. Many of the students are

recognized for excellence within the region and the state. The guidance department hosts a scholarship awards evening during which students are awarded various scholarships from the community. In 2008-2009, more than \$100,000 in scholarship monies was awarded to Guilford High School students. Programs such as Student of the Month, Scholar-Athlete of the Month, and Athlete of the Month provide our school community the opportunity to celebrate the varied contributions and successes of our students. In addition, the principal has made a tradition of recognizing student achievements as part of the daily morning announcements.

Students are evaluated using a number of standardized tests. These include PSAT, CAPT, AP, ACT, SAT I and SAT II. All grade 10 students take CAPT. On the CAPT *Reading Across the Disciplines* test, 79% of students scored at or above the state goal compared to 45.5% statewide. In *Writing Across the Disciplines*, 79.8% of students scored at or above the state goal, compared to 57.9% statewide. In mathematics, 78% of students scored at or above state goal, compared to 50.1% statewide. In science, 75.9% of students scored at or above state goal compared to 46.3% statewide. The 2008 results demonstrated an academic achievement level never before attained by our students. These results, when benchmarked with schools throughout Connecticut, place GHS students among a competitive field of schools and districts. In 2008, 162 students, or 58% of grade 10 students, earned the distinction of CAPT Scholar (students who earned a four or higher on each of the tests).

At Guilford High School, 92.5% of graduates takes the SAT I Test compared to the state average of 77.6%. The average SAT score was 519 in mathematics, 539 in critical reading and 537 in writing, compared to the state averages of 504, 502, and 503 respectively. Based on the 2008 PSAT/NMSQT scores, Guilford High School has 10 commended students and seven finalists in the 2010 National Merit Scholarship Competition. In the 2008-2009 school year, 198 students were administered 271 AP exams in 14 subjects with 77.4% scoring three or higher, compared to the state average of 71.5%. Guilford High School maintains a consistent graduation rate of 99%. In the class of 2008, 91% of the graduating males and 97% of the females went on to post-secondary education. Seventy-five percent of the male and 86% of the female graduates went on to four year colleges. Ten percent of males and 8% of females attended a two year college. Six percent of males and 3% of females went on to vocational schools. Seven percent of the males and 3% of the females went on to immediate employment. About 2% of the male graduates entered military service. Since 2006, there has been a trend of more graduates pursuing post-secondary education over immediate employment. *US News and World Report* selected Guilford High School as one of the top 2% academically performing schools in the United States by awarding GHS a silver medal.

Guilford High School offers a variety of co-curricular activities for its students including 28 athletic programs for boys and girls. An active intramural sports program is highlighted by a volleyball season involving students, faculty and staff. Over 56% of the high school students participate in at least one athletic program. The GHS Theater Arts Program has more than 150 students participating in two major productions, one minor competition and numerous other theatrical opportunities. In 2010, the theater department will be sending a production to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland. The Music Department offers two co-curricular groups, the Percussion Ensemble and the Sports Band. In 2010, the Wind Ensemble and Symphony Orchestra will hold two performances during a tour of Italy. There are 39 clubs at Guilford

High School reflecting the diverse interests of the student body. In addition there are groups such as Student Senate and academic honor societies in which students are either elected by their peers or selected by the faculty.

Guilford High School has engaged in a variety of school initiatives to improve student learning. A new daily schedule was introduced for the 2008-2009 school year to improve learning and teaching opportunities. The Guilford Public Schools adopted the Principles of Learning™ as developed by the Institute for Learning at the University of Pittsburgh, and the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model of organization. In 2007-2008, common assessments and rubrics in core curricula were developed to engage teachers in discussions about the improvement of student learning. In 2008-2009, the PLCs continued to develop common formative assessments to make data-driven decisions regarding student learning. In the fall of 2008, a Capstone Project Steering Committee representing teachers, students, parents, administrators, and community partners developed a Capstone Project piloted in the 2009-2010 school year. The capstone experience provides an enriching activity which engages participating students in a personalized learning experience. In 2009-10, GHS developed and piloted an after school tutorial program to provide focused instruction for students who need additional support and practice in the areas of mathematics and language arts. A full year tutorial program will be implemented for the 2010-11 school year aligned to the Guilford Public Schools' scientifically-based research intervention (SRBI) initiative. Other initiatives include the development of new courses such as Advanced Placement Micro and Macroeconomics, introduced in 2009-2010. Calculus BC is scheduled for implementation in 2010-2011.

Guilford High School has developed and maintained significant community partnerships. One of these community connections is the GHS parent group, Guilford Connections, which was involved in the implementation of both the new schedule and the Capstone Project. Through forums and publications, GHS Connections keeps families informed and provides a medium for the community to express opinions and suggestions. GHS Connections also provides a breakfast for students prior to CAPT testing and recognizes the staff with luncheons during the year.

Guilford Youth Mentoring is a district wide organization that provides a unique partnership between Guilford schools and community businesses and organizations. This organization is affiliated with the Connecticut Mentoring Partnership and the National Mentoring Partnership. It is an award winning program with over 135 mentors providing more than 7,000 hours of their time and talents to students in need and to teachers who ask for assistance. Also, Guilford High School is very proud to be a member of the national A Better Chance (ABC) program. This organization is dedicated to furthering the educational opportunities for minority students. It provides residence for six young women who attend Guilford High School.

The Guilford Fund for Education (GFFE) is a community organization designed to improve the educational opportunities for Guilford students. The GFFE partners with the school and community to foster excellence in instruction by providing grants to teachers for projects that are not funded by the operating budget. Some projects funded by GFFE grants include the Model United Nations program, the purchase of a laser cutter to support and broaden the technology curriculum, funding for the development of the Robotics Team, the commission of

an original piece of music written especially for the GHS symphony orchestra, and the purchase of a SMART™ interactive white board for the math department.

Guilford High School also partners with local businesses. The Vocational Instruction Program (VIP) provides participants with a varied curriculum devoted to the development of vocational instructional skills using school and community-based resources. Students have the opportunity to work in the community at businesses such as Page's Hardware and Appliance, the Visiting Nurse Association, Big Y Supermarket, Palumbo's Automotive, Subway and the Guilford Food Center. In addition, the Business Club is an extracurricular organization that invites local business owners to come in and share their expertise with the business classes and club members. These internship options, along with the Capstone Project experience, deepen the relationship between the school and community.

### **School Improvement Planning**

The 2007-08 school year marked the arrival of a new administrative team at Guilford High School focused on using student performance data to inform instruction and monitor achievement. Due to this emphasis on data driven instruction, several initiatives were introduced at either the building or district level. These initiatives were: a new academic schedule, increased rigor in the curriculum, implementation of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model, the use of the LearningWalk<sup>SM</sup> protocol, a new district-wide discipline plan, a senior Capstone Project and a systemic effort to reduce out-of-school suspensions.

The Professional Learning Community (PLC) model, allows teachers to work interdependently toward a common goal for which members are held mutually accountable. This, along with the infusion of the Principles of Learning (POLs) in all classrooms and improved student achievement, has been a major focus of this administration. This is evidenced by increasing scores on national and state assessments. Work within PLCs includes, but is not limited to; increasing performance on CAPT assessments, improving SAT/ACT scores, improving Advanced Placement results, the creation of a school wide writing rubric and the development and use of common formative assessments to inform instruction. Teachers collaborate within their PLCs to develop goals as a team which align with the school goals. These SMART (Strategic/Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results Oriented, Time Bound) goals are based on student data collected from common assessments. The student data gathered throughout the year drives work within the PLCs. In addition, the school goals support the district goals; this alignment of curriculum and expectations enhances the overall success of the district, school, faculty and students.

Learning Walks<sup>SM</sup> provide evidence to be used to refine professional development in order to improve teaching and learning. In this protocol, teams of administrators, department chairs and teachers visit classrooms throughout the school to observe the implementation of POLs intended to support student learning. This evidence is shared with the faculty as a validation of success as well as a springboard for future growth.

It is a primary goal of Guilford Public Schools to reduce the rate of out of school suspensions. To this end, the district has developed positive behavior supports and a standardized disciplinary referral form. In addition, the district has developed a document detailing its philosophy of Discipline and Behavior which values integrity, responsibility, equity and tolerance. This policy is posted in each classroom. In 2008-09, Guilford High School suspensions were reduced 41% from the previous year.

# Mission Statement

The mission of Guilford High School is to focus on learning in a rigorous academic learning community that is safe and respectful.

The vision of the Guilford High School community is that all individuals will develop the beliefs, skills, and dispositions for lifelong learning and realize their fullest potential. We believe that the goal of education is to help young people to assume a meaningful, responsible, and productive role in society. To achieve this goal students will:

- learn through rigorous programs that meet their diverse abilities, needs, aspirations, and interests
- reach their highest capabilities in a climate where learning is a shared, mutually-accountable, data-driven collaboration among teachers, students, parents, and community
- understand their shared responsibility for their education
- develop habits of lifelong learning
- develop a respect for the uniqueness and accomplishments of themselves and others
- mature into independent, reasoning individuals who make responsible decisions, adapt to a changing world, and develop into productive and responsible citizens

## **ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS**

To meet the demands of the global community students will:

1. demonstrate appropriate communication strategies by writing and speaking for a variety of purposes and audiences
2. demonstrate appropriate reading and listening skills for a variety of purposes
3. analyze and evaluate a variety of sources for reliability and credibility
4. apply effective strategies for problem-solving by
  - a. gathering information
  - b. analyzing and interpreting data
  - c. thinking critically
  - d. communicating solutions
5. employ technology appropriately to facilitate learning, research, and communication

## **SOCIAL AND CIVIC EXPECTATIONS**

To meet the demands of the global community students will:

1. understand and apply concepts of lifelong health and wellness
2. demonstrate an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship
3. fulfill community service requirements
4. participate in community activities beyond the social and civic requirements of Guilford High School
5. practice ethical behavior and take responsibility for their words and actions
6. act with tolerance, respect, courtesy, and compassion

**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES**

**COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

**TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS**

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**MISSION AND EXPECTATIONS**

**FOR STUDENT LEARNING**

-----  
**CURRICULUM**

-----  
**INSTRUCTION**

-----  
**ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT**

**LEARNING**

## Teaching and Learning Standard

### **1** 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:
  - are measurable;
  - 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 and expectations for student learning of Guilford High School (GHS) was developed by a committee composed of faculty members, a paraprofessional, a student, and a parent. The committee met beginning in November of 2008 and, using the previous mission statement, began a discussion of the values and beliefs of the school community. The resulting draft of the new mission statement was developed primarily by the teachers who served on the committee and who provided opportunities for other faculty members, parents, and students to review the draft and make suggestions for its amendment and improvement. The faculty members who served on the mission development committee were selected by the steering committee as representatives of the following subject area departments: English, technology, mathematics, science, world languages, physical education, and social studies. Several drafts of the mission were disseminated to all faculty members for review and revision before the committee formalized the final mission document that was adopted by the whole faculty in separate department meetings in May 2009. During the fall of 2009, the committee presented the mission and expectations for student learning to the student senate and responded to questions and suggestions concerning the document. The committee also presented the completed mission and expectations to the Guilford High School "Connections" parent group which ratified it in the fall of 2009. In December 2009, members of the Guilford High School Steering Committee presented a PowerPoint presentation concerning the mission to members of the Guilford Board of Education. Open to the public and televised to the greater community, the Guilford Board of Education meeting allowed members of the greater Guilford community to review the discussion of the revised document and the board of education's vote of approval of the completed document that had been created by the faculty committee. Faculty members, staff, students, and the Guilford Board of Education have voted to assume ownership of the mission and are making efforts to ensure that it becomes a driving force in the school. (self-study, panel presentation, teachers)

Guilford High School's mission reflects the fundamental values and beliefs held by the school community. The school administrators, teachers, students, and parents can cite key phrases within the mission statement and provide examples of how the concepts "rigorous, safe, and respectful" that are integral values of the mission are key elements in the school. The mission statement and expectations for student learning align with the "Principles of Learning" (POL) adopted by the entire school district, as reflecting the school community's fundamental values and beliefs about teaching and learning. Students identified a variety of learning opportunities and class activities offered at GHS which support the school's fundamental values and beliefs. These opportunities and activities are outlined in the *program of studies* and listed on the GHS website. Teachers and administrators identify various indicators of success for the mission and expectations including a graduation rate of 99 percent and improved overall student performance on all standardized tests. According to the Endicott Survey, a majority of faculty members, parents, and board members surveyed agrees that the school's mission statement embodies their core values and beliefs about student learning. Students and faculty members are very familiar with the district POL that are posted and discussed in classes. In general, students

and teachers are more familiar with the POL than with the expectations for student learning which are published as a part of the mission statement. However, the values expressed in the mission statement reflect the values of the school community concerning teaching and learning, and all stakeholders are united in their efforts to achieve the mission. The universal acceptance of the school's mission statement aligns with the belief system of the school community, but GHS needs to ensure that all members of the school community know and understand all aspects of the mission statement as distinct from the POL and the importance of using the expectations for student learning as a measure of the school's achievement of its mission. (parents, panel presentation, Endicott Survey)

Faculty members at Guilford High School have defined the school's academic expectations for student learning which are measurable and reflect the school's mission statement. They have identified civic and social expectations as well; but, the faculty members' use of the evaluation process for measuring student achievement of the expectations is not consistent or universal. The academic expectations challenge students to demonstrate proficiency in core curricular areas and include the use of technology. The core academic areas or departments have identified academic expectations for which they assume primary responsibility while the remaining departments have assumed both primary and secondary responsibility for various academic expectations that align with their curricula. The professional staff has developed school-wide rubrics that measure each of the academic expectations. (teachers, self-study, panel presentation)

Guilford High School's social and civic expectations reflect the school's mission; however, in order to support student achievement of these expectations, GHS needs to develop clear indicators, standards, or metrics to assess student achievement of the civic and social expectations. For example, GHS has an expectation that students will participate in community activities beyond the social and civic requirements of Guilford High School but does not stipulate how many of such activities are sufficient to demonstrate accomplishment of the expectation. Currently, students demonstrate mastery of some social and civic expectations through a series of graduation requirements outlined in the *GHS Program of Studies*. These requirements include a community service project, participation in clubs and activities, and the successful completion of both a health course and a civics course. The professional staff has not yet developed a method to assess and measure all of the civic and social expectations. In order to ensure student achievement of all the civic and social expectations, GHS must develop and employ measurable indicators that address each of the civic and social expectations and provide rubrics that allow assessment of achievement. (GHS Program of Studies, GHS web-site, student work)

Guilford High School has identified targeted levels for the successful achievement of the five academic expectations using the school-wide rubrics. In addition, the school has identified descriptors for the advanced and exemplary achievement levels in the rubric. Although teachers state that they support the use of the school-wide rubrics, less than 40 percent uses the school-wide rubrics to measure student work in specific subject areas. Additionally, the Endicott Survey revealed that close to half the faculty does not clearly understand how the school-wide rubrics relate to the academic expectations. In the same study, less than 50 percent of the faculty reports that they understand how the school assesses civic and social expectations. Although there has been professional development supporting the district's Principles of Learning, and

dedicated time for the NEASC self-study process, teachers have not had sufficient time to establish a protocol for review and evaluation of student work that includes established benchmarks and exemplars for each level of performance identified in the school-wide rubrics. It is clear that teachers do not provide students with feedback concerning the performance levels of their work because teachers do not rate student performance using the school-wide rubrics. While GHS teachers have developed school-wide rubrics, students have not benefitted from their application to student work and are not learning the formative use of the rubrics to improve their own work. ( student work, students, panel discussions, Endicott Survey)

Guilford High School has identified some measurable indicators by which it assesses its progress in achieving school-wide civic and social expectations. The GHS Civic Expectations require students to complete two years of health and physical education to demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of lifelong health and wellness. In addition, students are required to take a one semester civics course and complete a twenty-hour community service requirement. To address social expectations, the school discipline committee has compiled data from referrals and suspensions to monitor student behavior. However, while the school has identified the indicators and collected data, the indicators have not been qualified to establish successful parameters. For example, the school reviewed the GHS three-year suspension trend to measure one of the social expectations, but it has not specified the percentage of suspensions that is acceptable to prove the successful achievement of the social expectations regarding student behavior. No specific evidence or percentage of referrals has been indicated. For civic expectations, the school has not identified a method to collect data and/or assess the percentage of students who, “act with tolerance, respect, courtesy and compassion”. When GHS clarifies and sets limits for its data-based indicators, it will be able to measure school-wide success in meeting social and civic standards. Additionally, as indicated in the Endicott Survey, less than half of the faculty reports that they understand how the school assesses its overall progress in achieving its civic and social expectations. If GHS uses a more comprehensive whole faculty process to create and define a process that clarifies how the social and civic indicators are used to measure school-wide success in meeting the civic and social expectations, everyone in the school community will be able to understand and explain the more meaningful procedure and to determine the level of the school’s success.. (students, Endicott Survey, teachers)

While the values expressed in the GHS Mission Statement are evident in the school culture, the mission statement and the school’s expectations for student learning have not been used to a significant degree to determine the procedures, policies, and decisions of the school. The school mission statement and expectations have been integrated into the school’s communication efforts such as the morning announcements, classroom discussions, the program of studies, and the GHS website. In addition, the mission is posted in most classrooms and other areas throughout the building and is included in the parent handbook. The school mission is also printed on school e-mail messages and on all school stationery. Parents and students are required to acknowledge, by their signatures, that they have read the student/parent handbook and understand all expectations. While students are familiar with the mission’s assertion that students should benefit from a “rigorous academic learning community that is safe and respectful”, some are not able to cite the academic, civic, or social expectations. While decisions made regarding the procedures, programs, and policies for GHS are not antithetical to the mission and expectations, they are not consciously developed with the mission in mind and justified publicly using mission references. More emphasis needs to be given to the importance

of the GHS Mission as the basis for decision-making and assessment of how well the school is progressing. (mission standard committee, panel presentation, teachers, Endicott Survey)

Currently, Guilford High School has not created a plan that ensures a regular review of the mission statement and expectations for student learning. According to the Endicott Study, 60 percent of school board members indicate involvement in the review of the school's mission statement within the last five years. In 2008, the first meeting of faculty members revising the mission and expectations committee took place. The former school vision and mission statement served as the starting point of the committee's work. The school community is in the process of developing a plan to review the mission statement and expectations for student learning using a variety of data. Planned review and revision with a timeline by a committee that represents all the stakeholders in the school community will be necessary to assure the continued relevance and strength of the school mission. (Endicott Survey, self-study, mission and expectations standard committee)

### **Commendations**

1. The process employed by the mission committee that garnered approval of many members of the school community of the tenets contained in the school's mission and expectations for student learning
2. The ability of faculty members, students, and parents to articulate the values and beliefs expressed in the school's mission statement
3. The board of education's support of the mission document
4. The posting of the school's mission statement throughout the building and through the various modes of communication to the school community
5. The efforts of administrators and faculty members to familiarize the school community members with the mission and expectations
6. The Creation of rubrics and selection of a level of success for student achievement

### **Recommendations**

1. Develop a specific plan for a formal and regular review of the mission that includes a variety of data concerning student needs and community expectations
2. Develop indicators and/or metrics for civic and social expectations
3. Define behavior expectations for GHS students that are measurable

4. Clarify the similarities and differences between the district principles of learning (POLs) and the school-wide expectations for student learning
5. Ensure that all faculty members contribute to the creation of processes to assess students (rubrics) and the school (indicators) as they can clarify these processes to students and parents and implement them

## Teaching and Learning Standard

# 2

## 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.

## CURRICULUM

### Conclusions

All curricular areas at Guilford High School (GHS) have identified the school wide-academic expectations for which they are responsible. These areas are clearly identified in the Guilford High School *2010-2011 Program of Studies*. Guilford High School adopted new academic, civic, and social expectations in May 2009 to reflect the school's revised mission statement. Each department has identified one or more of the five new academic expectations for student learning for which it has assumed primary responsibility and secondary focus. As a result, teachers, students, and parents are able to determine which departments and courses emphasize specific academic expectations. (curriculum documents, program of studies, teachers, central office administrators)

GHS curriculum documents list learning objectives and strategies that address many of the same skills and knowledge emphasized in the academic expectations. However, the school-wide academic expectations themselves are not listed or referenced in curriculum guides, and the written curriculum is not clearly driven by the school's mission and academic expectations for student learning. Although the academic expectations are not directly referenced, many areas of the school's curriculum support the expectations for writing and speaking, reading and listening, problem-solving, and employing technology to support learning, research, and communication, but provide fewer opportunities for students to practice and achieve the academic expectation for analysis and evaluation of a variety of sources. Additionally, some courses do not clearly address the school-wide expectations or provide sufficient opportunities for students to practice and master them. Support for students who are not meeting the expectations is provided through a number of programs and services. An afterschool academic tutorial program provides support three times a week for students 9-12 recommended by teachers who have targeted specific areas of need and support in math, reading, and writing. Academic support is also provided through the math lab, the learning center, and structured study halls. However, while faculty members have identified the school-wide academic expectations that they are responsible for teaching, they have yet to incorporate them into the written curriculum. Without explicit alignment with the school-wide academic expectations, the curriculum cannot provide teachers direct guidance on instructional strategies and assessments that ensure that all students have sufficient opportunities to practice and achieve the school's academic expectations. (curriculum documents, self-study, teachers)

The formats of GHS curriculum guides vary widely. The curriculum guides contain course-specific content and learning goals, suggested instruction and assessment activities, and department-specific academic expectations. However, not all courses integrate the school-wide academic expectations, and the suggested assessment techniques do not reference the school-wide academic expectations or the use of the relevant school-wide rubrics. Most of the existing curriculum guides were written prior to the adoption of the school-wide learning expectations in 2009 and, thus, do not reflect the revised expectations. Curriculum documents, student work samples, and classroom observations show that most discipline areas are using content-based or departmental rubrics to assess student learning to varying degrees. About 46 percent of teachers

believes that written curriculum documents are not clear or comprehensive, and a review of the curriculum documents substantiates this opinion. For example, the format used in the social studies curriculum guides varies even from course to course. Curriculum for newer courses such as Microeconomics includes suggestions for evidence of achievement, learning objectives, and inquiry-driven strategies. The Comparative Religions curriculum describes learning objectives, suggests resources and activities, and references the Connecticut standards by number. The psychology curriculum prescribes essential questions, content standards, key concepts, instructional objectives, suggested resources, performance assessments, and standards. In science, the curriculum document articulates a K-10 overview and summary of guiding principles followed by course-specific curricula. The specific 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum documents identify content strands, essential questions, assessment strategies, content and performance standards, and instructional strategies; while all other science course curricula have two or more of the following: learning objectives, resources activities, Connecticut Frameworks references, skills, and essential concepts. The art department curriculum is largely an overview of each course containing lists of content standards, the course prerequisites, and a brief description of the course offering with no instructional strategies, assessments, or essential questions provided. The English curriculum format is more consistent; most course curriculum guides cite the state standards and identify essential questions, content standards, instructional objectives, resources, performance assessments, and standards. While members of the learning community agree that the curriculum reflects the school's mission and expectations, they have yet to incorporate them as the explicit guiding forces in the development and review of curriculum. For the specific discipline and school-wide rubrics to be used effectively, they need to be incorporated into the curriculum format for all courses. GHS faculty members must develop a template for curriculum guides that ensures consistency across all subject areas and ensures that all courses align with the school-wide academic expectations. This format should include content, integrate relevant school-wide learning expectations, include course-specific learning goals, and suggest instructional and assessment strategies that include the use of school-wide rubrics to be complete. Updated curriculum documents will serve as clear guides for students, parents, and faculty members. (curriculum documents, self-study, Endicott Survey)

Guilford High School's curriculum engages most students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking, and provides many opportunities for the authentic application of knowledge and skills. A review of the school's curriculum, student work, and classroom visits confirms that the curriculum provides students with varied opportunities to engage in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking as well as the authentic application of knowledge and skills. Primary source analysis, debates, role play/simulations, oral presentations, research projects, mathematics applications, laboratory experiments, and the varied offerings of the integrated technology department provide ample opportunities for students to be challenged and to grow as individuals. The math curriculum requires students to apply mathematical concepts of probability and statistics to predict car prices or compare and contrast cell phone plans. In a French III class, students plan a virtual on-line trip through France and produce a travelogue that includes all aspects of their trip planning, including budgeting, accommodations choices, and sightseeing itinerary with cultural and historical descriptions expressed in the country's native language. In social studies, students are involved in a role-play debate in which they argue an assigned point-of-view on a controversial topic. Students may enroll in a course that offers the opportunity to build kayaks, canoes, and other watercraft as well as earn a safe

boating certification. However, some students report that Level 1 and Level 2 classes are not challenging them. A review of student work found that there are varying levels of expectation in the courses offered to students across the curriculum and equal variation in documentation determining challenge and engagement. Seventy-seven percent of parents indicates that their children acquire skills that will benefit them later in life. According to some parents, their college-aged children report that GHS experiences have prepared them well for their college classes. Some indicated that graduates had already learned in high school some of the material they are being taught in their college courses. While many Guilford High School students benefit greatly from engaging and challenging activities that teachers create across the curriculum, the challenge level for some students in some courses is not sufficient or consistent. Students in some courses at GHS would benefit from a more engaging and rigorous curriculum as emphasized in the school's mission. (Endicott Survey, parents, classroom observations, student work, students)

There are opportunities for students to be involved in interdisciplinary activities in some courses, but integrated activities are not embedded in the curriculum. Interdisciplinary connections are informal and depend on teachers to initiate an authentic integration of subjects. The world humanities course described in the *Program of Studies* as an interdisciplinary offering is no longer co-taught as an interdisciplinary course. Although instructional resources may be shared, the course's English and social studies components are taught separately, and the teachers receive no common planning time. Thanks to the efforts of teachers who wish to emphasize connections among subjects, the curriculum is integrated across departments in some instances. Informal teacher collaboration has resulted in integrated learning experiences for students in art, English, math, music, world language, social studies, integrated technology, and science. For instance, an English teacher and a social studies teacher developed an activity that resulted in students from both classes participating in a mock trial. Forty-five percent of students reports that their teachers include topics from other subject areas in their lessons. The recently-created capstone project also encourages students to make connections across subject areas and to delve deeper into an area of interest. Many curriculum guides emphasize depth of understanding as evidenced by the articulation of essential questions, conceptual understandings, and performance assessments. In some classrooms, essential questions are posted, referenced, and discussed with students during instruction. In a number of social studies and English courses, performance assessments require written reports or projects to demonstrate mastery of learning. A greater emphasis in all curriculum areas on cross- curricular connections would enrich and make student learning experiences more relevant. (student work, teachers, curriculum)

Guilford High School provides many opportunities for all students to extend learning beyond the normal course offerings and the school campus. Students participate in a variety of after school groups and clubs, community service programs, local/state/national competitions, exhibitions, public performances, athletic activities, and student leadership groups. In addition to the student senate and athletic leadership team, there are 39 special interest clubs and 31 athletic groups. The administrators support student-initiated clubs such as the sign language club, which allows students to pursue interests not addressed in the existing curriculum. Students have numerous opportunities to compete academically in regional and state competitions in math, science, music, and the arts and to participate in civic activities through service clubs, the Special Olympics, and Relay for Life. Students have opportunities to

supplement world language study with travel abroad experiences in France and Morocco. The annual boat launch, alternate energy car race, annual poets' day, and literary and news publications extend learning beyond the school campus and school day. For the second year, the capstone project provides an avenue for students to independently apply concepts and skills they have learned in an area of their choice under the guidance of a school advisor and a volunteer mentor from the community. In addition, graduation requirements to complete 20 hours of community service promote the extension of civics education to real-life settings. Guilford High school students have access to courses provided by Gateway Community College and Saturday seminars at Yale University. Programs for students in the arts are available outside the school day at the Educational Center for the Arts in New Haven focusing on dance, instrumental and vocal music, creative writing, theater, and visual arts. GHS students benefit from the wide variety of opportunities to extend their learning beyond the school day and school campus. (parents, principal, self-study)

There is some curricular coordination and articulation between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district. The curriculum is reviewed on a five-year cycle. Curriculum development begins with a review by a committee comprised of representative teachers in each discipline K through 12 under the direction of the assistant superintendent of schools. The committee evaluates existing curricula and explores instructional materials and programs before identifying major themes and objectives for the discipline under review. For example, the K-10 science curriculum has a unified guide well-aligned to the state frameworks and includes the expected performance standards from kindergarten to grade 10. It prescribes specific performance-based strategies and assessments aligned with the standards. Once the curriculum is designed, the high school's building administrators and department leaders who serve as curriculum leaders assume responsibility for implementation and evaluation. At the middle level, curriculum implementation is delegated to instructional leaders. There is no formal coordination of curriculum between the high school and middle school, and there is time provided for the middle and high school faculties to discuss curriculum and its implementation. Professional development time is set aside for teachers in the two schools to discuss instructional strategies related to the district Principles of Learning as well as book discussions related to content literacy, but no time is designated for middle school teachers to collaborate with high school colleagues on curriculum implementation. At the high school level, departmental Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) meet regularly to discuss curriculum, formative and summative assessments, and instructional strategies. Some departments have arranged meetings for interdepartmental coordination. For example, a math teacher participates in the technology PLC to help identify curricular connections and support the technology department's implementation of the school-wide academic expectations. Teachers are committed to the integration of skills and content from other discipline areas into their instruction as evidenced by survey results that showed that 72 percent of seniors said information they learned in one class can be used in another. School counselors at the high school and middle school collaborate during the scheduling process to ensure that incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders are placed in academically appropriate courses that build on middle level courses each student has taken, their academic performance on the CMT, and other indicators of strengths and needs. Vertical coordination is discussed at least twice a year in elective areas such as world languages. While PLC meetings provide time to discuss curriculum implementation and coordination, more opportunities to discuss vertical articulation, especially with middle school faculty members, would help GHS ensure that students receive instruction that is well-planned

to meet their needs and provide them with courses that guarantee that they have many opportunities to fulfill the academic expectations. (Endicott Survey, self-study, teachers)

Instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, staffing levels, and the resources of the library media center are sufficient to support the implementation of the curriculum. Each teacher has a school-issued laptop and every classroom has a minimum of one computer with Internet access. Approximately one-third of the classrooms have interactive whiteboards. Teachers report that any software required to implement curriculum is accessible upon request. Students and teachers have access to three computer labs as well three laptop carts, and additional computers are available in the library media center. Eighty-five percent of faculty members has access to technological resources, and 71 percent feels the school provides adequate materials and resources. The print and electronic resources provided by the library media center are adequate to implement the curriculum. Teachers report that instructional supplies are readily available to support the implementation of the curriculum. The student-to-teacher ratio is 14 to 1, with an average class size of 18.9 students. GHS teachers and students benefit from resources that support their learning needs. (self-study, Endicott Survey, teachers)

The professional staff is actively involved in the ongoing development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum based on assessments of student performance in achieving course-specific learning goals. Seventy-one percent of the faculty members agrees that they are involved in the ongoing development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum. The school district has committed to a five-year cycle to perform a comprehensive review of each of the four core areas: language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science. A committee composed of representatives from the teaching staff conducts reviews of existing curriculum. Departmental meeting time is set aside for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to discuss the implementation of the curriculum and any adjustments that may be needed. Teachers use PLC time to review and discuss student assessment data on both standardized assessments and course-specific assessments in order to determine whether changes to curriculum or teaching strategies are necessary to meet students' needs. Fifty four percent of the faculty feels that curriculum revisions are informed by student performance. All departments have made use of the majority of the following: state test results, advanced placement (AP) exams, Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SAT), American College Testing (ACT) results, and portfolio and presentation results to modify the curriculum to ensure students are meeting the school's academic expectations. Common department-wide assessments and specific instructional strategies are discussed monthly during department meetings to enhance the ability of each teacher to allow all students to accomplish specific academic expectations such as thinking critically and communicating solutions. Faculty involvement in ongoing development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum enriches the curriculum provided to GHS students. Further faculty involvement in the use of assessment data to inform decisions concerning curriculum revision will contribute to the refinement of learning goals, objectives, and instructional strategies designed to support student achievement of the academic expectations. (self-study, teachers, Endicott Survey)

Curriculum development is supported by the school and district leadership, funds, and resources, however, faculty members do not always have adequate time to develop, evaluate, and revise curriculum on an ongoing basis. The assistant superintendent oversees the curriculum revision process at the district level, assembling a committee each year to initiate the

review of an identified discipline area. The district provides release time during the school day that enables teachers to meet and articulate the K-12 vertical curriculum and identify the resources to support it. At the high school level, an assistant principal oversees the development and implementation of the building's curriculum. Revisions are made during Professional Learning Community (PLC) time which enables teachers to analyze data and determine needed adjustments to curriculum and instruction in order to address the needs of learners. Financial resources are provided for curriculum development. In addition to providing release time for curriculum development, the district allocates funds for textbook review and adoption. Funds are also provided to support summer curriculum work and to allow faculty members to attend conferences to help with curriculum writing. Nevertheless, the current structure for curriculum development has not provided the faculty with adequate opportunities for involvement in a comprehensive, ongoing review of the curriculum. As noted earlier, curriculum guides lack a direct connection to the school's mission statement and school-wide academic expectations.

Further, while GHS uses data from standardized and teacher-created assessments to indicate how students are progressing, currently it does not use data directly related to student achievement of the school's academic expectations to inform curriculum revision. Many of the guides employed by the high school faculty are course syllabi or do not describe instructional strategies or assessment techniques and therefore do not reflect the school's formal plan to fulfill its mission and expectations for student learning. Additional time focused on curriculum development that addresses the needed connection of the curriculum to the academic expectations would provide teachers with support and direction regarding curriculum implementation and would provide even greater support to students in their efforts to achieve the academic expectations. (teachers, central office administrators, self-study)

The GHS curriculum would better meet the needs of teachers and students if the school or the district provided more professional development activities that specifically relate to and support curriculum development. Of the 164 professional days granted to faculty members to attend out of district conferences, a majority focused on instructional strategies, special education, and the district-wide initiatives related to the Principles of Learning and Professional Learning Communities. Faculty members collectively used 164 professional days to attend out of district conferences and workshops in 2007-2008 and 111 days in 2008- 2009. A few teachers attended workshops in the development and implementation of advanced placement curriculum. GHS faculty members express an interest in professional development activities that provide training and time for the review, revision, development, and assessment of curriculum. Teachers and students will benefit from additional time dedicated to curriculum development and implementation. (teachers, self-study, curriculum documents)

### **Commendations**

1. The involvement of faculty members in the development, revision, and evaluation of curriculum
2. The extensive opportunities for students to extend their learning beyond the normal course offerings
3. The five-year curriculum review cycle provided for the review of core subject areas

4. The instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, and library media center resources dedicated to the support of curriculum implementation
5. The commitment of the board of education to provide funding to support professional learning communities

### **Recommendations**

1. Align the curriculum for each course with the school-wide academic expectations
2. Develop and implement a common template for all curriculum guides
3. Develop a process to ensure that all curriculum engages all students in inquiry and higher order thinking skills
4. Incorporate assessment techniques, including discipline-specific and school-wide rubrics, in all written curriculum documents
5. Provide more formal interdisciplinary experiences for students
6. Provide additional formal opportunities and professional development for teachers to review, revise, develop, and evaluate curriculum
7. Adopt a common template for all written curriculum guides
8. Expand opportunities for teachers to engage in consistent, sustained, cross-departmental, and vertical articulation and discussion of curriculum in all disciplines

## 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 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.

## INSTRUCTION

### Conclusions

Many of the instructional strategies that Guilford High School teachers employ are consistent with the mission statement and expectations for learning. The Guilford High School Mission Statement endorses a rigorous learning community that is safe and respectful. The mission and academic expectations are posted throughout the school and referenced in many areas, including the GHS website, and many teachers' materials, placing emphasis on the goals and expectations of the mission. The majority of GHS teachers recognizes the importance of high quality instruction for student success, and they base selected teaching strategies on their teaching experience, their knowledge of students, and their intention to provide meaningful and challenging learning opportunities. However, according to the Endicott Survey, only 47 percent of teachers reports that the mission statement influences their teaching decisions. Guilford High School administrators have placed a strong emphasis on the school's commitment to the district's Principles of Learning (POLs) and to Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Both of these approaches to developing professional discussion and growth provide GHS teachers with opportunities to reflect upon their teaching and to share a common language for discussions. GHS teachers' varying instructional strategies reflect the school's emphasis on providing high quality instruction for all students, but not all teachers observed during student-shadowing or classroom visits employed instructional strategies that correlate with the mission and expectations. For example, some classes involve a predominance of teacher-centered discussions or review of homework assignments that do not reflect the school community's commitment to challenge and high expectations as essential aspects of classroom activities. These classes demand only recall or recitation without providing challenges that demand higher order thinking skills. However, in other observed classes, students are involved in authentic application of learning, student-directed discussion or research, and questions that demand meta-cognition. For instruction to be consistent with the school's mission statement, an increase in consistency of challenging instructional techniques that align with the academic expectations needs to be an integral part of lesson design and delivery. (self-study, administrators, students)

In some classes, GHS teachers personalize instruction in order to meet the needs of all learners. GHS teachers work with students individually, in small groups, and through whole-class instruction to help students understand the concepts being taught. However, not all students believe that their teachers are aware of their learning needs or recognize teachers' efforts to personalize their learning experience. According to the Endicott Survey, only 53 percent of students states that teachers are aware of their learning needs. The mathematics department offers a math lab that is open to all students on a daily basis and teachers are commonly available to assist students before and after school as well as during the school day. About 85 percent of all GHS students reports feeling comfortable when approaching teachers for help. Many teachers offer students opportunities to select research-based topics or subjects of personal interest, and the Capstone project offer a unique opportunity for each student to select a project that demonstrates individual achievement. Teachers also keep parents informed of students' progress by regular updates on the school's web-based grading system, *PowerSchool*. Parents mentioned their satisfaction with the *Naviance* system that assists students who are preparing for college. Students maintain portfolios in physical education and English courses

that reflect their personal learning. While many students benefit from teachers' efforts to personalize instruction, some students require greater emphasis on personalization in classroom activities to support their efforts to achieve all of the academic expectations. (Endicott Survey, self-study, teachers)

The connections that GHS teachers make across disciplines are mostly informal and depend on teacher initiative. Cross-curricular connections are not embedded into the curriculum as formal shared classes are difficult to schedule, and are logistically challenging. According to the self-study, teachers occasionally collaborate across departments to create inter-disciplinary lessons; for example, a science teacher may visit a math class or students may use geometry as it relates to quilting in an art class. Teachers comment that some courses are co-taught by different subject area teachers to integrate disciplines, but the one course listed in the program of studies that is identified as an interdisciplinary course is not co-taught. GHS teachers are interested in providing interdisciplinary courses but are constrained by the complexities of time, location, and schedule. Any change in this area would require purposeful planning and action by school and department personnel. (self-study, teachers, students)

Self-directed learning in some subject areas is part of the learning strategies employed. According to teacher and student interviews, the use of "Accountable Talk", a Principle of Learning component, is emphasized across disciplines and is an example of how GHS teachers promote self-directed learning. Several examples of student work and classroom observations reveal that teachers require students to complete independent research. Teachers also encourage students to work in groups in order to gain a broader perspective as part of the learning process. Because of these efforts, GHS students benefit from self-reflection and opportunities to direct their own learning. (self-study, teachers, administrators)

Engagement of students as active learners at GHS varies across the school. Of the teachers taking part in the Endicott Survey, 94 percent feels their lessons are engaging and student-centered, but classroom observations reveal that many lessons are teacher-centered and employ a question and answer format resulting in some students exhibiting off-task behavior. Furthermore, the student survey results reveal that only 62 percent feels their teachers employ a variety of strategies to engage them. In music, English, and science, students are actively engaged in their learning because teachers design lessons that require a high level of engagement through student performing, designing, or using hands-on materials. However, because not all classes provide such opportunities, some students are not engaged in active learning. (classroom observations, Endicott Survey, students)

Student involvement in higher order thinking is a predominant goal of the school to create an "academically rigorous learning community." Some classes challenge students to analyze, debate, and synthesize information as part of a problem-solving activity, but challenging instructional activities that require higher order thinking are not universally incorporated into the learning process. The meaning of the term "rigor" as defined by the students, teachers, and administrators at GHS varies. When students are asked whether they feel the instruction at GHS is rigorous, they state "we have more AP courses now and the higher level courses go faster." When a teacher is asked to explain how their instruction is rigorous, some teachers refer to the challenge of an assignment while other teachers refer to the level of the course and the assumptions they have about the "make-up" of the students in a particular class. According to central office personnel, rigor is defined as thinking, problem-solving, and engagement.

The building administrators refer to rigor as it applies to the district's Principles of Learning, such as "Accountable Talk", "Socializing Intelligence", "Learning as Apprenticeship", and "Academic Rigor in a Thinking Curriculum" employing the terminology of the POL that is not used in the academic expectations. Some classes observed to be challenging and rigorous included biology, symphony orchestra, Art 2D, and Honors English. Because the school lacks a common definition of what constitutes high expectations and challenge, teachers are unable to be consistent in planning for "rigorous" instruction across the disciplines and students are unable to understand just what "rigor" involves. This definition and its active effect on teaching and learning at all levels would be an excellent topic for discussion in PLCs. (students, teachers, administrators)

Students demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills in variety of academic settings. Of the teachers surveyed, 91 percent reports that their lessons provide opportunities for students to apply concepts in new situations. The adventure based learning unit allows students to apply what they learn in class outside the classroom. Students apply subject-area knowledge and analytical skills when working with document-based questions (DBQs) in social studies and in advanced placement (AP) Spanish. In science classes, students apply their knowledge and skills as they perform labs and other scientific investigations. In math, students are encouraged to recognize and use the real-life applications of what they learn, such as statistics, probability, visual and spatial relationships taught in geometry, and the abstract thinking skills built through the study of algebra. Although students report that less than half of their teachers requires them to apply knowledge outside the classroom, GHS teachers provide ample opportunities to demonstrate application of knowledge. (self-study, teachers, students)

Students at GHS are encouraged to engage in self-assessment and self-reflection in many content areas. Students revise, critique, and evaluate their own work as well as that of their peers. Some teachers use the school-wide rubrics to assist students in their efforts to reflect on their learning at certain points throughout a course. Students are aware of the school-wide writing rubric which could be used to assess and revise their writing, but they state that teachers use departmental rubrics to score writing. Because of the commitment of teachers to encourage self- assessment and reflection, students are able to assess their learning across disciplines. (teachers, self-study, students)

Teachers at GHS obtain feedback from a variety of sources to influence their instruction. Some teachers provide students with an opportunity to express their opinions about instructional strategies through a teacher-developed end- of- year survey and offer suggestions for course improvement. Teachers also state they use data from the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT), Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), and common assessments to influence their instruction and meet the needs of all learners. However, only 49 percent of students indicates that their teachers solicit their input in an attempt to improve classroom instruction and there was little evidence provided to support the assertion that GHS parents have an influence on instruction. According to the survey, only 17 percent of parents stated that teachers ask for their feedback concerning instruction. Furthermore, teachers in both the survey and interviews report that teacher evaluations have little impact on their instruction. Of the teachers who responded to the survey, 49 percent feels supervisors who evaluate their teaching play an important role in improving their instruction. Many teachers feel that the evaluation process is lacking in relevance and significance to their instruction. Without

increased, meaningful feedback from a variety of sources, teachers will encounter difficulties in compiling sufficient data to improve their instruction. (teachers, Endicott Survey, self-study)

The teachers at GHS demonstrate expertise in their content areas, are knowledgeable about current research on instructional practices, and reflect on their own practices. One hundred percent of the teachers at GHS is certified professionals. Ninety-six percent of the teachers surveyed states that they discuss instructional strategies with their colleagues. Teachers also indicate that they informally reflect upon the results of common assessments with their department colleagues, but not all teachers have common planning periods. Some teachers report that PLC time is often dedicated to the discussion of common assessments, and teachers do not have sufficient time to discuss instructional approaches based on assessment data. Teachers are well versed in current educational trends regarding professional learning communities. The incorporation of the Learning Walks protocol affords teachers the opportunity to discuss best practices as they relate to classroom instruction. The superintendent of schools reports that approximately half of the faculty has been trained by the Dufours Institute in Boston in an effort to fully implement the practices of PLCs. The commitment of the central office administrators to fund professional development for current instructional processes is a testament to the district's focus on high quality instruction, but teachers lack sufficient opportunities to discuss best practices to improve instruction on a regular basis. (teachers, self-study, administrators)

Teachers at Guilford High School use technology in a variety of ways to support teaching and learning. Approximately one third of classrooms has interactive white boards; however, technical problems sometimes arise that affect teachers' ability to use technology to support instruction. Over the past five years, a technology improvement plan has provided laptop computers, access to Power School, teacher web pages as academic resources, homework pages, and wireless capabilities to improve instruction. All of these additions to the school's equipment have enhanced instruction. Classroom observations reveal the technical difficulties that teachers encounter during instruction and the real frustrations both teachers and students experience when modifications have to be made to the day's lesson because of technological glitches. Although the district's commitment to technology supports integration into the classrooms, its implementation is uneven and sometimes hampared by technical difficulties. (observations, teachers, self-study)

Some professional development activities provided for GHS teachers are guided by instructional needs, driven by data, and provide opportunities for teachers to develop and improve their instruction. Only thirty-eight percent of the faculty members agrees that the school's professional development program is based on the instructional needs of the teachers. Classroom observations reveal that teachers have sound educational intentions that inform their plans; however, there are sometimes gaps between the intentions and the results of instruction. In most instances, teachers plan lessons based on content-specific objectives and activities, but they do not always create lessons that students find engaging, relevant, and rigorous. The concept that professional development activities will be driven by the incorporation of the POLs first, and then the implementation of new instructional techniques will be confirmed by learning walks is reasonable in theory; however, in reality, the newly-created lessons are not guaranteed to result in rigorous, active learning which engages all learners. According to the assistant superintendent of schools, PD is driven by the analysis of student performance data that also

impacts professional practices. The self-study states that professional development focuses on differentiated instruction, vertical articulation, and authentic performance. Teachers new to the district, including experienced teachers from other schools and districts, receive professional development to familiarize them with the beliefs and expectations that govern instructional practices at GHS. Stronger connections among the results of student performance data reviewed by teachers during their PLC meetings, the planning for professional development activities, the professional development sessions, and the application of new learning to teaching activities will benefit both teachers and students. (self-study, Endicott Survey, teachers, observations)

Guilford High School employs the district's teacher evaluation and professional development plan that was jointly-developed by district teachers and administrators, but the supervision and evaluation processes prescribed by the plan do not always result in instructional improvement. The teachers at GHS are evaluated using the 2001 Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development Plan. During teacher interviews and standard sub-committee meetings, teachers stated that use of the year-end narrative as a way to reflect on attainment of individual goals based on school-wide goals is not effective. The school's self-study report states that the majority of teachers is in the growth phase of the professional development plan that requires a pre-conference, formal classroom observation, and a post-conference. However, in the teacher evaluation plan document, teachers in the growth phase are not evaluated using observations. This contradiction displays a misconception about the evaluation process that leads to confusion. In addition, the teacher survey reveals a gap between the stated goals of teacher evaluation and implementation of the prescribed process. Less than half (49 percent) of the faculty members agrees with the statement that "input from supervisors evaluating my teaching plays a significant role in improving my instruction". Without an effective evaluation plan informed by best practice and clarified for professional staff members, teachers will not gain the maximum benefit from growth plans and formal observations designed to improve instruction and student learning. (self-study, teacher, evaluation plan)

### **Commendations**

1. The collegiality and commitment of the faculty to instructional improvement
2. The inviting and supportive learning environment that teachers establish for their students
3. The opportunities to reflect and apply learning across disciplines
4. The introduction of the capstone project as a means of self-directed learning for students
5. The implementation of the district's Principles of Learning across disciplines
6. The district's investment in instructional technology that supports instruction and learning throughout the school throughout the school
7. The commitment of the school leadership team to support and improve instruction

through Learning Walks

### **Recommendations**

1. Develop and implement a plan to ensure that all instructional strategies are consistent with the mission and expectations
2. Develop a common definition of academic rigor as it applies to instruction
3. Incorporate in all classes challenging instructional activities that require higher order thinking
4. Increase the use of data from various sources such as administrators, parents, and students to improve instruction
5. Incorporate time into teacher schedules for PLC collaboration in all departments
6. Expand the use of Learning Walks to encourage reflection by teachers
7. Update and implement the teacher evaluation process to improve instruction
8. Increase discussion of instructional strategies within PLC to improve student learning

## Teaching and Learning Standard

### **4**

## **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 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.

## ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

### Conclusions

While Guilford High School has developed a new mission that includes five school-wide academic expectations with corresponding rubrics, the school has not yet developed a process to assess school-wide and individual student progress in achieving the academic expectations in the mission document. School-wide rubrics for the academic expectations that align with the recently revised Guilford High School Mission Statement were developed and introduced across all discipline areas during the 2009-10 academic year. Each department then assumed primary and/or secondary responsibility for each of the school-wide academic expectations. Teacher use of the school-wide rubrics was piloted in the spring of 2010. The school intends to expand the use of the school-wide rubrics and to develop a viable process to assess individual and school-wide achievement of the specific academic expectations in the mission; however, at this point, the faculty has not developed a plan, and the use of school-wide rubrics is inconsistent. Once GHS faculty members implement a systematic plan to collect and analyze student performance data based on the rubrics, they will be able to determine both school-wide and individual student achievement of the expectations, and members of the school community will clearly understand that the school is meeting its mission. (teachers, self-study, assessment standard committee)

The professional staff at Guilford High School uses some data to assess the success of the school in achieving its civic and social expectations; however, at this time, it has not developed a well-defined or consistent process for identification or a metric for the data. The professional staff clearly defines numerous opportunities where students demonstrate meeting the six civic and social expectations described in the mission document. For example, through the required health, physical education, and civics courses, students demonstrate their understanding of the concepts of lifelong health and wellness and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Guilford High School also requires that students fulfill twenty hours of community service in order to meet a graduation requirement. Enrollment in clubs, musicals, sports, and civic groups are also cited as activities that support students' documentation of participation in community activities. The administrators document student attendance, drop-out rates, tardiness, suspensions, and awards. In 2009, the district established The Guilford Public Schools Philosophy of Discipline and Behavior in order to promote responsible behavior K-12. A discipline committee, consisting of teachers, parents, students, administrators, and the school resource officer, developed and implemented strategies which have resulted in a 61 percent decline in the suspension rate over the past three years. The assistant principal and the dean meet weekly in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to discuss strategies for implementing the discipline plan and to monitor the new in-school suspension (ISS) plan. There is, however, no targeted level of successful achievement of the social and civic expectations, nor is there a process in place to assess each individual student's achievement in meeting the school-wide civic and social expectations or to determine school wide-success. Consequently, although faculty members and administrators feel they have a sense of how students are progressing, it is not clear whether all students are meeting school-wide civic and social expectations. (program of studies, self-study, assessment standard committee)

While teachers clarify course-specific learning goals and how they are assessed, few of them clarify to students the relevant school-wide academic expectations for each learning activity. According to the self-study, the 2009 Endicott Survey found that 72 percent of all students knew in advance the criteria required to earn a grade on a particular assignment; however, there was no data in the survey to show that students could link the objective of each learning activity to school-wide academic expectations. Further, students have no way of knowing if they are achieving success on school-wide academic learning expectations. While many classrooms have the five school-wide academic expectations posted, few teachers make references to the connection between the learning activity and the academic expectations. The students are aware of the existence of school-wide academic expectations but are not familiar with their relevance to classroom activities and assignments. All core areas have developed some department-specific rubrics that align with the school-wide academic expectation rubrics. Many individual teachers have developed course-specific rubrics that align with department goals and with the school-wide rubrics; however, this practice is not consistent across all departments or classes. Therefore, students are not able to understand how learning activities enable them to achieve the school-wide academic expectations. (classroom observations, student work, student interviews)

Many Guilford High School teachers base their classroom assessment of student learning on the use of departmental and course-specific rubrics. However, samples of student work reveal that many teachers use rating sheets and scoring guides instead of rubrics. Teacher interviews, discussions with members of the assessment standard committee, and a review of student work indicate that the use of school-wide rubrics is currently only in the initial phase. Many teachers feel that course-specific and department-specific rubrics are often a better match to the assignments they create. Of the teachers who have developed course-specific rubrics, only a few have clearly aligned them with the academic expectations, while other departments have yet to articulate how their learning goals and assessments align with the school-wide academic expectations. Some departments have developed course-specific rubrics that can be used by all teachers who teach the same course. Teachers have not established a protocol for the collection of student work, benchmarks, or exemplars for each level of performance identified in the school-wide rubrics. To date, teachers have made efforts to develop benchmark assessments in each course as a means of applying the school-wide rubrics in classroom activities, but benchmark assessments are not yet complete or employed consistently across the curriculum. Unless teachers refine the course and department rubrics so that they clearly connect with classroom assessments, teachers' assessment practices will not assist students in meeting the school-wide academic expectations. In addition, Guilford High School teachers need to discuss, develop, and implement classroom activities and assessments that students clearly understand relate to the academic expectations for learning. When faculty members establish a protocol for the collection and review of student work, create benchmarks, select exemplars of student achievement of the expectations, and apply school-wide rubrics to measure achievement, GHS will be able to determine its success in achieving the academic expectations. (student work, self-study, teachers)

Teachers at Guilford High School implement a wide variety of assessment strategies to measure student knowledge, skills, and competencies. Various assessments include portfolios (53 percent), real life authentic assessments (66 percent), and performance/ common assessments (84 percent). Of the faculty members surveyed, ninety-six percent reports using seven or more assessment strategies. Standardized tests including the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), the

Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT), the American College Testing (ACT), the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), and advanced placement (AP) scores are analyzed and measure student growth over time. Currently, there is no system in place to track data of student achievement based on these various assessments. GHS students benefit from the variety of assessment strategies teachers employ to measure student learning; however, GHS must develop a process that allows teachers and administrators to track student progress over time to determine both student needs and student success in meeting the academic expectations. (assessment standard committee survey, student work, teachers)

Most GHS teachers meet both formally and informally to share student work and analyze the results of student assessments for the purpose of revising the curriculum and improving instruction. Course-specific common planning time has been built into the master schedule for teachers in the five academic areas for the purpose of PLCs. Teachers indicate that during PLC time they discuss individual student progress in meeting academic expectations. At the beginning of the year, departmental PLCs review CAPT performance data and set goals for improvement in reading, writing, science, and mathematics. Teachers are required to meet in PLCs one hour per month after school in addition to their common planning time. Because most teachers use common assessments, many disciplines use the results of those assessments to revise course curriculum and, to a lesser extent, improve instruction. Students benefit from the review of student performance data on common assessments when teachers make needed changes to curriculum and instructional strategies. However, teachers are not currently sharing the results of assessments that are based on the school-wide rubrics. As a result, the school-wide rubrics currently have little, if any, impact on curricular change or instructional improvement. Additional time for teacher collaboration will address this need when teachers make a commitment to employ the school-wide rubrics across the disciplines. (panel discussion, assessment standard committee, teacher, self-study)

Guilford High School's professional development program provides opportunities for teachers to collaborate in developing a broad range of assessment strategies. Responses to the Endicott Survey indicate that while most teachers collaborate with their colleagues, there is a need for more professional development opportunities to aid in the creation, implementation, and analysis of successful common formative assessments. Teachers also agree that additional training in developing a broad range of assessment strategies would support their efforts. While the district has provided some opportunities for collaboration, it would benefit teachers and students if additional time was specifically dedicated to training in varying assessment strategies. Teachers support an increase in PLC time for assessment development built into the school day. With increased time and training to help teachers master the development and implementation of assessments, GHS will be able to employ and interpret a wide range of assessment strategies needed to measure student achievement. (teachers, assessment committee, Endicott Survey)

Guilford High School's professional staff effectively communicates individual student progress to students and their families in a variety of ways. However, there is no standard, uniform process for communicating individual school progress in achieving all school-wide expectations based on school-wide rubrics. The most widely used system for communicating individual student progress to students and their families is *PowerSchool*, a web-based student data management system that tracks individual student grades by quarter, semester, and year,

including mid-terms and finals. While the school's professional staff also communicates CAPT and SAT scores to the public, there is no communication of information concerning individual or school-wide progress in achieving the school's academic expectations to students, parents, or the community. While targeted levels of acceptable achievement for the school-wide academic expectations have been identified, a process to track and assess student achievement over time has not been established. Consequently, students, their parents, and the community are not informed regarding student progress toward meeting the school-wide academic expectations that are part of the mission statement. (parents, assessment standard committee, self-study)

### **Commendations**

1. The variety of assessment strategies that teachers employ that reflects an understanding of varied learning styles and allows teachers to determine student knowledge, skills, and competencies
2. The use of common rubrics employed by several members of the English, world language, mathematics, science, and social studies departments in order to determine needed changes in curriculum or instruction
3. The formal and informal teacher collaboration regarding classroom assessments for the purpose of improving student learning
4. The use of data from CMT, CAPT, AP, ACT, and SAT assessments to determine instructional or curricular needs to improve student achievement
5. The multiple opportunities for students to fulfill their civic and social expectations

### **Recommendations**

1. Establish and implement a systematic process for assessing school-wide and individual student progress in achieving the school's academic expectations
2. Establish a protocol for the assessment of student work with established benchmarks and exemplars for each level of performance identified in the rubrics
3. Establish and implement a process that involves established indicators for assessing the success of the school in achieving its civic and social expectations
4. Clarify to students the relevance and connection of school-wide expectations to each learning activity

5. Ensure that all faculty members use the school-wide rubrics as part of a process to determine the level of student success in meeting both the objectives of specific units and the academic expectations
6. Ensure that all teachers use the school-wide rubrics to inform curricular and instructional changes that will improve student achievement
7. Develop a process that ensures that Guilford High School regularly reports to parents and the school community its success and the success of individual students in meeting civic and social expectations
8. Provide professional development activities that support faculty use of a broad range of assessment strategies, increase faculty understanding of the effective use of school-wide rubrics, and provide training in the development of common formative assessments and rubrics
9. Develop a formal process to track and communicate to the school community the individual student and school-wide progress in achieving school-wide academic expectations

**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

**COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

**SUPPORT STANDARDS**

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**LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION**

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**SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**

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**COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**

# 5

## 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 board of education 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 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 board of education shall support the implementation of the school's mission and expectations for student learning.

## LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

### Conclusions

The Principal of Guilford High School has sufficient autonomy and decision-making authority to lead the school in achieving the mission and expectations for student learning. The superintendent and the board of education support the principal's initiatives and his budget requests. The superintendent stated that the board of education is confident that the principal's decisions are well-informed and research-based. Most high school faculty members and all members of the board of education indicated in the self-study that the principal has appropriate responsibility, autonomy, and authority to ensure the successful operation of the high school. Students, teachers, and parents describe the principal as a visible administrator whose leadership has had a notable and positive effect on the school community. Consequently, the principal is able to lead the high school effectively in working toward the achievement of the mission and expectations for student learning. (self-study, central office administrators, school leadership team )

The Principal of Guilford High School provides leadership in the school community by creating and maintaining a shared vision, direction, and focus for student learning. At the beginning of each school year, the principal employs multiple opportunities to share the school's vision and focus through open faculty meetings, student orientation programs, and a *Back-to-School* night for parents. Throughout the school year, he meets regularly with the administrative team, school leadership teams, and support personnel to discuss the school's mission, vision, and expectations for student learning which are posted throughout the building. He communicates regularly with students and faculty members by beginning each day with the morning announcements during which he provides focus to the school day, celebrates students' and teachers' successes, and offers pertinent information. In addition, he shares the school's vision in a monthly newsletter which is distributed to Guilford families and faculty. Students, parents, and faculty members note his presence during the school day and frequently at extracurricular programs, performances, and sporting events. He welcomes students, parents, staff members, and community members into the school and encourages their input and feedback. He is a strong proponent of the Principles of Learning (POL) and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), initiatives that support the school's vision by fostering student achievement. A recent example of his leadership is the introduction of Learning Walks, an integral component of the Principles of Learning that help guide instruction. Because of the principal's effective leadership, students, parents, teachers, and support staff members have a clear understanding of the school's vision, direction, and focus for student learning. (self-study, parents, central office administrators, teachers, students)

Teachers as well as administrators other than the principal provide leadership essential to the improvement of the school. Faculty members, including the assistant principal and deans, are actively involved in committees that address school improvement. Teachers have opportunities to participate in the leadership of the high school. They are involved in decision-making and are encouraged by the principal and his administrative team to provide input and feedback. Currently, teachers are organizing a faculty advisory committee, an endeavor supported by the high school administrative team. Through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and departmental meetings, teachers offer input about the budget, the schedule, and the curriculum. Faculty members serve on interviewing committees for administrators, teachers, and coaches. Additionally, they are in the early stages of implementing Learning Walks to provide their peers with instructional leadership and expertise. Of the faculty members surveyed, 83 percent agrees that teachers at Guilford High School participate in a variety of leadership roles in the school. Leadership opportunities for teachers are varied, ongoing, and expanding

to support student learning. As a result, teachers as well as administrators other than the principal provide essential leadership to the improvement of student learning. (Endicott Survey, self-study, teachers, leadership team)

The organization of the school and its educational programs promote the school's mission and expectations for student learning. The administrative team, consisting of the principal, assistant principal, the athletic director, and two deans, is responsible for ensuring effective leadership of school departments, each of which is coordinated by a department head or director. These departments include: art, business/family and consumer science, English, guidance, health education, library media, mathematics, music, physical education, science, social studies, special services, technology, and world languages. The administrators maintain a strong focus on the school's mission and expectations through monthly school leadership team meetings with department heads and directors and with Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Professional Learning Communities offer teachers opportunities to discuss student work within and across disciplines. Faculty schedules and early release days are organized to maximize meeting time. Faculty members and the administrative team indicated that the board of education approved \$50,000 in professional development training to ensure the effective implementation and organization of PLCs at Guilford High School. As a result of broad-based support and focused initiatives, the organization of the school and its educational programs promote the school's mission and expectations for student learning. (central office administrators, self-study, teachers, department leaders)

Student grouping patterns at Guilford High School 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. Courses such as Special Arts, Art of Living, and Adaptive Physical Education enable students with special needs to learn with students in regular education classes. Freshmen are heterogeneously grouped in English, Algebra 1, and social studies classes. With the exception of honors and advanced placement (AP) classes, all world language classes are heterogeneous and physical education, art, music, and integrated arts classes are not leveled. For some elective courses, students may select a level zero option, giving them the opportunity to broaden their learning experiences without impacting their quality point average (QPA). GHS has eliminated level three classes in an effort to increase the opportunities for all students to experience challenging courses. In addition, the school offers many AP classes and encourages students to select challenging courses as part of their planned program. At this time, Guilford High School is gradually implementing the capstone project which had 21 participants during the 2009-2010 school year. This program requires students to create a project on a topic of interest to them and to incorporate learning from a variety of courses they have completed. Through inclusion practices, piloting new programs, and the elimination of basic level classes, Guilford High School is adopting grouping patterns that foster greater heterogeneity and provide challenge and engagement for all students. (self-study, leadership team, teachers, department leaders)

The schedule is driven by the school's mission and expectations for student learning and supports the effective implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The schedule at Guilford High School, an eight-period schedule with six classes meeting each day within a four-day cycle, has been in place for two years. Teachers and students described this schedule change that took place in 2008-2009 as a result of dissatisfaction with the 45- minute class

period. Although teachers described the former dissatisfaction as longstanding, the change took place under the leadership of the principal shortly after he assumed his duties as principal. During interviews, students reported two major concerns with the previous schedule. The schedule did not provide a guaranteed lunch for all students and the amount of time for passing between classes was too short. Students and teachers report that many schedules were reviewed and discussed before the present schedule was adopted. By increasing the length of class periods to 57 minutes and decreasing the amount of time for passing between classes, students note that all students now have guaranteed lunchtime, but passing between classes remains a problem. While most teachers express satisfaction with increased instructional time to address individual student needs within the class period, a few teachers comment that the change has not significantly improved teaching and learning. A physical science teacher observed that science classes, previously a double 90 minute period in length, have been reduced to 57 minutes, limiting the time available for laboratory experiences. An art teacher noted that student projects that require daily attention have suffered because of the alternating schedule that drops classes. However, since the institution of the new schedule in 2008, the enrollment in honors and advanced placement courses has increased and student achievement on AP and CAPT assessments has increased dramatically. Most faculty members and students agree that the current schedule with longer class periods supports the school's mission and expectations for student learning and supports the effective implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. (teachers, students, facility tour, self-study)

Students, parents, and faculty members have meaningful roles in the decision-making process at Guilford High School. Being part of the decision-making process promotes an atmosphere of participation, responsibility, and ownership. Students, teachers, and parents report that there are multiple opportunities for providing input and feedback to the high school administrators. Teachers actively participate in PLCs, serve on task forces to address specific issues, and explore new initiatives such as Learning Walks and the capstone project. The faculty advisory council is being organized by teachers to provide another channel for communication to administrators. Parents note that their involvement in decisions that affect their children is valued at the high school. Information for parents is provided on a regular basis through *PowerSchool*, the *Naviance* network, newsletters, the website, e-mail, and phone calls. Parents offer support and contribute to decision-making with their involvement in booster clubs, parent support groups, parent teacher organizations, mentoring programs, and the Guilford Foundation for Education. Of the parents surveyed, 47 percent reports active participation in an array of parent organizations. Students also report opportunities for involvement in decision-making at the high school. They note that the principal seeks their input, involves them on task forces on a regular basis, and values their suggestions for change. With numerous extracurricular, athletic, and service-learning opportunities available at Guilford High School, students comment that there are multiple venues for involvement in decision-making and for the development of leadership skills. At Guilford High School, the input of all stakeholders-- parents, students, and staff members is respected. As a result, there is an atmosphere of participation, responsibility, and ownership that results from the meaningful roles of parents, students, and faculty members in the decision-making process. (self-study, parents, teachers, Endicott Survey, high school leadership teams)

Guilford High School strives to maintain a student load that allows teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students. Administrators examine data from the student course selection process to determine the number of sections that will be offered per course. Students select

their desired academic level based on their interests and advice from their teachers, guidance counselors, and parents. Class sizes vary drastically across the disciplines and levels. For example, classes such as technical education have a prescribed maximum limit of students of sixteen in order to maintain a safe atmosphere. However, class size is actually determined by the schedule which sometimes creates unbalanced sections. For example, AP Calculus classes range from seven to thirty-two students per class. The school average class size is nineteen, and the teacher loads are under 125 students. In most cases the current student load and class sizes afford teachers the opportunity to provide for the individual learning needs of their students. (Endicott Survey, student shadowing, self-study)

Guilford High School has no 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. While there is no formal program in place, there are numerous opportunities for student involvement in activities that foster connections with adults at Guilford High School. With 57 percent of the student population participating in athletics, teachers and coaches cite the athletic program as a vehicle for encouraging adult-student relationships as well. Additionally, 35 faculty and staff members serve as advisors to the 725 students who participate in the 31 club offerings at Guilford High School. The central office and the board of education support the creation of new clubs each year. Moreover, the fine arts program offers fifteen percent of the student body close connections with the adults who run that program. When students are struggling, the Scientifically Research-Based Intervention Team (SRBI) connects them with an adult member to offer additional supports. Students report that the student assistance center is a place where students regularly access services from counselors or social workers. Of high school seniors and parents surveyed, 70 percent of the students and 74 percent of the parents are able to identify at least one adult at the school, in addition to the guidance counselor, to contact for assistance when problems arise. The introduction of the capstone project provided 21 students the opportunity for mentoring by faculty members, including the principal. Furthermore, the Guilford Youth Mentoring Program supports identified students with community mentorship during the school day each week. The teachers and administrators expressed interest in creating an advisory model, but they have not begun a formal process. While many students have opportunities for formal connections with adult members of the Guilford High School community, the development of a formal advisory program will ensure that all students will have the opportunity to develop a supportive relationship that personalizes their experience and supports them in meeting the academic expectations for learning. (student shadowing, teachers, school leadership team, Endicott Survey)

While teachers request more time to meet in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), efforts are being made to schedule regular and consistent opportunities for faculty members to collaborate within and across departments in support of learning for all students. Teachers belong to a variety of PLCs including the full faculty, subject areas, discipline, SRBI, and cross-curricular subjects. The PLC model reinforces a collaborative commitment to the school's focus on the Principles of Learning (POL). With the creation of departmental and common course planning times within the master schedule, teachers are able to use the dedicated time to discuss expectations, curriculum, and student work. Moreover, the introduction of the Learning Walk model by administrators and the recent opportunities for teacher participation reinforces

reflection and collaboration to improve instruction and student learning. On an informal basis, teachers in different disciplines collaborate on lessons. Collaboration efforts have been established between world languages and mathematics, art and orchestra, English and library media, and civics and English. Although a co-teaching model between special education and regular education teachers is only in the early stages of implementation, the administrators support the expansion of the model to include more teachers and subject areas. While some discussions take place between members of the high school and the middle school on expectations and curriculum, guidance counselors at the middle school and high school report that they need more time for collaboration and coordination. Furthermore, the collaboration of the SRBI Team, consisting of teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, school psychologists, nurses, social workers, and student assistance counselors benefits at-risk students through the coordination of support services. Through the work of Professional Learning Communities and the SRBI Team, Guilford High School promotes regular, ongoing collaboration that focuses on student learning, goal development, and student progress monitoring both within and across departments. (teachers, panel presentation, student work, self-study)

At Guilford High School, faculty members and staff members collaborate and communicate in order to promote the well-being and learning of the students. A clear, positive relationship between students and faculty members can be found throughout the school. Numerous faculty and staff members actively participate in the school activities beyond the school day in the role of advisors and coaches. The parents note that the teachers “go above and beyond” to support students. Additionally, they offered numerous anecdotal examples of the principal’s capacity to reach out to all students and his high visibility at school activities and athletics. The students described the clerical staff, custodians, nurse, and cafeteria workers as friendly and supportive. A portion of PLC time is provided for teachers to identify struggling students as well as students who should be challenged at a higher level. With high visibility in the hallways, frequent check-ins with students, and an open-door policy for students, the leadership team of principal, assistant principal, and deans is readily available to students. Because of the building layout, teachers and students report a significant amount of time is necessary for travel from one part of the building to another. Furthermore, students note inconsistencies in teacher enforcement of the tardy rule so that learning is interrupted and time on task is diminished. With the exception of this one area, faculty and staff members collaborate effectively to promote the well-being and learning for students. (student shadowing, classroom observations, teachers)

Student success is regularly acknowledged, celebrated, and displayed at Guilford High School, particularly in public areas. Through the morning announcements, the principal makes a concerted effort to share student successes in academics, athletics, and the arts. Additionally, in the hallways, the principal frequently congratulates students on their accomplishments. Samples of student work can be found throughout the school in display cases and on bulletin boards. In the main foyer, display cases for art, music, theater, and athletics are prominently showcased. In addition to the numerous student projects displayed in the hallways, student work is evident in many classrooms. The school newspaper and local newspapers regularly report the accomplishments of the students in the classroom and the community. Awards program recognition as well as honor rolls and honor societies are publicly noted. Both the local Guilford Community Television (GCTV) and the board of education provide multiple opportunities for recognizing and celebrating student achievement. Additionally, parents

volunteer their time to videotape games and events for promoting the positive participation of the student body. Of the faculty members surveyed, 92 percent reports that student success is regularly acknowledged, celebrated, and displayed. The recognition and celebration of student accomplishments clearly instills a sense of pride throughout the school and community. (facility tour, student shadowing, parents, Endicott Survey)

Guilford High School students and faculty members enjoy a safe and respectful environment, resulting in a sense of pride and ownership. Students are friendly and demonstrate their pride in the school and its programs. Furthermore, students report that the school is a safe environment with relatively few discipline issues. The social and civic standards are displayed throughout the school. At the beginning of the school year, faculty members communicate their academic and social expectations to the students. The administrators collect data to inform changes in the school discipline and supervision structure. As a result of data analysis the administrators changed supervision patterns in the cafeteria, hallways, and locker rooms, as well as the direction of lunch wave traffic. With the introduction of clear behavioral expectations and consistent consequences by the administration, suspensions have declined steadily over the last three years. Although there is a general climate of respect in the building, a few students disregard school regulations concerning texting/ use of cell phones in school and prohibiting food in classrooms. However, when students were asked about the school environment, they described the high school as a safe and respectful environment. While the overall climate of Guilford High School is safe, positive, respectful, and supportive, continued data analysis along with consistent communication and enforcement of social expectations will enhance school pride and ownership and improve student behaviors in classrooms and hallways. (student shadowing, observations, Endicott Survey, self-study , panel presentation)

The Guilford Board of Education supports the implementation of the school's mission and expectations for student learning. In 2009, the board of education voted to accept the Guilford High School Mission Statement as proposed by the faculty committee. Moreover, seventy-nine percent of the faculty believes that the board of education supports the mission and expectations. The board of education holds its monthly public meetings in the high school library and provides video transcripts through the local cable access channel. With the development of the proposed high school schedule change, the board of education participated in the discussions and sought participation from the school community. The assistant superintendent reported that the board of education participates in monthly training programs developed to inform them about ongoing school initiatives. The board of education further supports the school by approving funding requests that positively impact the school and its mission and expectations. During interviews, the members of the board of education made references to the expectations of rigor from the school's mission statement. Of particular note, was the financial support to train teachers and administrators in the professional learning community model that drives much of the collaboration and focus on student learning in the high school. Thus, a positive relationship clearly exists between the leadership team and the board of education, helping foster the implementation of the school's mission. The board of education's support of Guilford High School through funding and engagement allows the school to further its mission and expectations for learning. (board of education, central office administrators, Endicott Survey)

## **Commendations**

1. The autonomy and decision-making authority that the board of education and superintendent grant the principal
2. The positive working relationship the principal maintains with members of the GHS community
3. The principal's effective leadership and shared vision concerning student learning through the implementation of the Principles of Learning
4. The encouragement of faculty leadership to promote school improvement and the school's missions and expectations for student learning
5. The implementation of Professional Learning Communities within and across disciplines
6. The elimination of the level 3 classes to support heterogeneity and to improve student achievement
7. The number of advanced placement classes and the increased participation of students due to open enrollment
8. The involvement of students, faculty members, and parents in the decision-making process
9. The student load assigned to faculty members that allows for personalized instruction
10. The celebration of student success and achievement throughout the school and community
11. The support of high school initiatives by the board of education

## **Recommendations**

1. Develop a formal advisory program that personalizes each student's educational experience
2. Provide professional development opportunities that support a co-teaching model for

regular and special education teachers

3. Enforce consistent guidelines to address student behavior issues such as tardiness to class and cell phone use
4. Continue to foster a positive and respectful school climate through data analysis and accountability
5. Continue to collect data and establish a planned review on the impact of the high school schedule on teaching and learning

## 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 services providers;
  - appropriate support in the delivery of special education services for students.

## **Health Services**

9. The school's health services shall provide:
  - preventative 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.

## SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

### Conclusions

Student support services at Guilford High School have been developed to enhance and improve student learning and have been refined in response to students' needs and goals expressed in the school's mission and expectations for student learning. The library/media services, health services, guidance department, and special education department share the vision that all individuals should develop the beliefs, skills, and dispositions for lifelong learning so that they may gain a meaningful, responsible, and productive role in society. The student support services focus predominantly on creating a safe environment for students and a community where all individuals respect each other. (self-study, school resources standard committee, teachers, support services personnel)

Guilford High School adequately allocates resources, programs, and services so that all students have an equal opportunity to achieve the school's expectations for student learning.

Recognizing that the needs of students at GHS vary, the school offers a range of services and course offerings. Guidance counselors review the offerings, procedures, and requirements of course selection directly with students to help them select classes. Students may choose to change levels and to challenge themselves and discuss their interests with their teachers and guidance counselors. Incoming freshmen and their parents attend a presentation about course offerings and requirements. In addition, the school's program of studies describes all of the courses offered as well as an explanation of the school-wide rubrics, the grading system, and factors to consider when making course selections. Some of the specialized course offerings include thirteen advanced placement courses, one UCONN Early College Experience course (ECE), tutoring for English Language Learners (ELL), and life skills classes created for students with special needs. Other academic opportunities for students include the option to attend a variety of magnet schools or vocational agricultural schools in the New Haven area. In addition to attending one of these schools on a full-time basis, GHS students may also audition for the part-time Educational Center for the Arts (ECA). Special needs students at GHS have consistent services beginning with an individualized education plan (IEP) that includes goals and objectives specific to the students' needs. These students also receive individual transition and career counseling. Other offerings for students with special needs include IEP transition planning and the career exploration course. For main-streamed students who need assistance, the math lab is available all day and is accessible to all students. Students with special needs who need more individualized and intensive instruction may be recommended through the planning and placement (PPT) process to participate in direct instruction special education classes in the four core areas of English, math, science, and social studies. In some departments, students with special needs are mainstreamed and team-taught with the support of paraprofessionals. The special education department collaborates with subject area teachers in planning lessons and teaching the classes; the daily scheduled planning period gives teachers the opportunity to work together with the special needs personnel. The school provides opportunities for students to participate in civic and social clubs and organizations. These include National Honor Society (NHS), Action Against Hunger, Business Club, Best Friends, Care and Respect for the Elderly (CARE), Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD), UNITY Club, Debate Team, Gay Straight Alliance, Interact, Model United Nations, and Teens Rallying

Against Cancer (TRAC). The school tracks students' social and civic expectations through the graduation requirement of 20 hours of community service, the physical education/health graduation requirement, and the mandated Civics class. A safe environment and a respectful community are addressed in various ways throughout the school. Guidance counselors, in addition to helping students with scheduling their classes, provide personal counseling and refer students to community agencies, when necessary. The nurse also helps provide a safe and healthy environment through her extensive work with monitoring student health needs including the school's student-athletes' concussions through ImPACT, a software monitoring program. She keeps all records of concussions for seven years as a way to monitor the effects of the concussions. A speech language therapist, two school social workers, and a full-time and a .6 school psychologist collaborate with the special education department and mainstream classroom teachers to provide a caring and safe environment for students and staff members. GHS students are comfortable approaching adults in the school to help them cope with life struggles; the school resources instill respect and sensitivity in its members by working with and counseling students concerning their academic endeavors and emotional needs. (students, teachers, Endicott Survey, self-study)

Guidance counselors, the school nurse, special education teachers, the library media specialist, and paraprofessionals work cooperatively with other GHS faculty members in addressing the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of students, thereby enhancing student learning. Through co-teaching, the special education and regular education teachers work cooperatively in addressing the academic needs of the special needs population. Regular education teachers receive information from special education teachers at the start of the course regarding student goals, learning styles, modifications, accommodations, and contact information for the case manager. In addition, counselors, teachers, and parents meet to discuss academic plans for struggling or at-risk students who may need additional support. Support staff members also plan transition PPTs for incoming freshmen to determine appropriate placements at the high school level. Also, the high school and the various community agencies collaborate in supporting the families and students of GHS. Counselors refer students to agencies such as Women and Family Life Center, Guilford Mentoring Program, Guilford Youth and Family Services, Guilford Public Library, and The Cove, a community-based support group for grieving children. Students are also identified for behaviors of concern through the Scientifically Research Based Intervention (SRBI) team. Guidance personnel communicate with other members of the professional and support staff in various departments to enhance student learning through participation in Planning and Placement Teams (PPTs), 504/Accommodation meetings, and Professional Learning Communities. The different support services provide teachers with relevant information if they need to understand how to modify procedures and assessments of their students as well as to modify learning strategies for physically disabled students. Additional collaboration takes place in the school's library media center, where the library media specialist collaborates with faculty members to provide resources for special projects or units of study. She notifies staff of new materials and consults faculty members regarding the addition and deletion of titles in the library's collection. She also attends department meetings to keep abreast of changes in curriculum. She is open to resource suggestions for the library and is interested in collaborating on the planning of lessons with classroom teachers. Students learn how to evaluate websites in ninth grade through the library media curriculum, and they feel comfortable using research skills by the time they are seniors. Although the Endicott Survey found that only 53% of the staff has used the library to enhance

lesson planning, teachers and students give a more positive picture of the media center and of its importance to student learning in their interviews. School support services collaborate with each other and with the faculty naturally throughout the school year. Because of the support and cooperation of the support services personnel, all Guilford High School students have ample opportunities to practice and achieve the expectations for student learning. (self-study, students, parents, teachers)

Student support services personnel at GHS employ different methods to determine the effectiveness of their services. Although the guidance department does not employ a formal evaluation process to determine the success of its services and programs, department members meet at least twice a week to address short-term issues concerning their students' academic and emotional needs and three or four times a year to discuss department goals and evaluate the effectiveness of their programs. In June, the department surveys graduating seniors asking them to evaluate their four year experiences with the guidance department. In September, the department uses this information to develop goals for the upcoming year. *Naviance*, the student data management system, has recently been added as a tool to provide the department with the ability to assist college planning and, eventually, to conduct student surveys. The nurse uses a professional health survey, *Asset Survey*, to determine the well-being and behavior of the student population. Team Guilford financially supported and administered the survey to all students, and the information was professionally disseminated and provided to the school nurse. The school is planning an assembly to present the data to the students and staff members. The health office staff includes a full-time registered nurse, a full-time health aide, a part-time visiting aide, and a health supervisor whose office is located at GHS. The nurse is evaluated by the health supervisor, who serves other schools as well as the high school. Even though she is not the high school's nurse, the health supervisor actively participates in student activities, including being a club advisor and chaperoning fieldtrips. She knows many students by name and helps promote the caring, safe environment in the health office. By tracking student visits to the library, the library media specialist (LMS) evaluates how often students use the facility and all of its resources. With the recent elimination of the position of a second library media specialist, the media department is in a transitional stage. The present LMS, who has been responsible for the technology in the library, is now responsible for all aspects of the library, which includes evaluating the library's book collection, teaching library media skills, and developing strategies to increase literacy, as well as teaching technology. Through weeding older books and replacing them with newer titles, the LMS will be able to be effective in more ways than she already has been as a technology expert and a natural collaborator. The high school special education department recently used feedback from the state's focused monitoring program in an effort to reduce the suspension rates of special education students. Since the school's special education coordinator's position was eliminated, the structure of the department has been in the process of being reorganized. One of the deans of students, previously experienced as a special education coordinator in an elementary school, is supervising the special education teachers and planning department meetings. Guilford High School Student Support Services will be able to refine and improve their practices and programs if they develop more formal and consistent processes to evaluate their services to include both input from parents, students, and teachers. (teachers, LMS, facility tour)

Effective and ongoing communication between parents and student support personnel takes place in a variety of ways at GHS. The district shares information concerning support services and school-based programming through the superintendent's e-newsletter, The Anchor. The community has access to school information through the district and high school website, the AlertNow telephone, e-mail systems, the district newsletter, the annual State of the School's Report, the local television network, the New Haven Register, and two town publications. In August, the principal's newsletter is sent to all students and parents. Prior to the opening day of school, an orientation program for freshmen and new students is conducted to introduce administrative and guidance personnel, to familiarize students with the layout of the school building, and review resources for academic, personal, and social concerns. In addition, all new teachers participate in an orientation that details all support services offered at GHS. Professional Learning Communities (PLC), faculty meetings, and workshops all serve as forums to better inform and assist teachers in using the resources available to assist students. Teachers also participate in 504 accommodation meetings, PPTs, and staffing meetings concerning identified students. The SRBI team serves as a liaison between teachers and students. A district-wide support service meeting is scheduled monthly to facilitate discussion of issues that pertain to district and building level resources, outreach services, and professional development. Back to School night, UNITY week, (a week that focuses on student respect and tolerance through assemblies and small group discussions), health screening letters, health fairs, freshman library orientations, and guidance meetings with students, staff members, and parents offer valuable information to the community. The Endicott Survey reveals that only sixty-two percent of both students and parents is aware of the support services available in the high school. Consequently, a guidance counselor has recently volunteered to create a pamphlet that specifically lists all support services, personnel, roles, and contact information. This pamphlet will be available before the end of this academic year. The school's website provides information concerning student support services and directs students and parents to the appropriate personnel and office at the school. However, contact would be more user-friendly if there were direct links from the homepage to the media center, the faculty pages, and the curriculum pages. Guilford High School has established effective communication channels to meet the needs of students and parents who would benefit from student support services. (self-study, teachers, guidance counselors )

Student records, including health and immunization records, are maintained in a confidential and secure manner consistent with federal and state law. The special education department locks copies of student files in fireproof cabinets housed in the school; the original files are stored in fireproof cabinets at Calvin Leete School. The secretary in the special education department maintains all student records and organizes all PPTs. All health records for current students are maintained in locked, alarm-secured files in the health office. Once students graduate, files are kept for six years and then moved into a locked storage area. Eighty-four percent of parents trusts that student health and medical information will remain confidential. At the end of six years, both the special education and health records are destroyed, but the public is first notified via public access television and newsprint so that a parent or a student over the age of 18 may obtain the original records. All student records are kept in paper format and are not transferred to microfiche or CDs. Although the health, guidance, and special education student records are maintained in a confidential and secure manner, data warehousing might be a more effective

way to continue to be in compliance with state and federal law. (special education secretary, nurse, guidance counselors, self-study)

GHS has sufficient certified/licensed personnel and support staff members to provide effective counseling, health, special education, and library media services. As a result of budget cuts, the positions of coordinator of special education and one secretary in the pupil services department were eliminated. This department now consists of six full-time special education teachers, 11 instructional paraprofessionals, one full-time school psychologist, one part-time (.6) school psychologist, one full-time speech/language pathologist, two full-time school social workers, five full-time guidance counselors, and one full-time guidance director. Other related school services personnel include one substance abuse counselor, contracted through Guilford's Youth and Family Services, an occupational therapist, and two secretaries, one of whom is also the school registrar. The student/counselor ratio is approximately 200 to one (the state recommended ratio is 250 to one). There is one library media specialist and two media paraeducators. At GHS, the health department includes the district health coordinator, one full-time registered nurse, and one part-time health aide from the district. The district health coordinator's office is located at the high school, but she may be anywhere in the district or state on any given day. Despite recent reductions to personnel assigned to student support services, GHS provides effective counseling, health, special education, and library media services that support student needs. (pupil personnel services director, school nurse, guidance counselors, students)

Guilford High School provides a full range of comprehensive guidance services. In addition to providing academic counseling which includes program selection and post high school planning, school counselors serve on individual education planning committees for identified students. Some seniors report that they would like increased time to meet with their counselors to plan for the college application process. The guidance department also has a comprehensive, developmentally-based program including classroom presentations, individual and small group meetings, large community events, parent evenings, and outreach efforts. School counselors collaborate on a regular basis with the school psychologist, social worker, the health office staff, teachers, and administrators. They provide emotional support through individual and group meetings. The counseling staff also confers with parents, private counselors, therapists, and physicians on an as-needed basis while collaborating with community resources. While most of the students' personal, social, civic, career, and academic developmental needs are met by the various student support services, seniors would benefit from more frequent appointment with their counselors. (counselor interviews, self-study, parents, students)

Guilford High School Health Services provide preventive and direct intervention services, appropriate referrals, mandated services, emergency response mechanisms, and ongoing student health assessments. The health office is a comfortable, although small, space where students come for medical as well as emotional needs. During visits to the health office, students show a trusting and comfortable relationship with the nurse and aide. The health department provides preventive and direct intervention services through the health class curriculum, annual scoliosis screening, and hearing screenings. Connecticut law mandates a physician's exam, which includes hearing and vision, for all sophomores. No GHS student is allowed to enter the eleventh grade without a completed physical examination health form. In addition, every athlete must obtain an annual physical exam before participating in a sport. At the beginning of

each school year, every student is required to submit an emergency form which is processed by the health office. In addition, an ongoing medical alert system through *PowerSchool*, a student data system, informs teachers of medical concerns of their students. The system alerts teachers about student illnesses and conditions. In the Endicott Survey, ninety-six percent of the GHS faculty members indicates that the health office keeps teachers apprised of the specific health needs of their students, and 80 percent of the faculty believes that the health services are sufficiently broad. The health office also has a portable communication device which allows daily communication for immediate response in emergencies and critical situations. The nurse's office also uses a pulse oxymeter, a finger device that measures pulse and oxygen levels in blood; the oxymeter is helpful in monitoring asthmatic students. A defibrillator is housed outside the nurse's office, as well as in three other areas of the building. The nurse, the physical education and health teachers, and the athletic coaches are trained in their use. In addition, ninth graders are trained to use the defibrillator in their health classes, and there is a plan in place to train administrators. The nurse coordinator arranges the training for the nurses in the district each year. Eighty-one percent of Guilford parents trusts the emergency procedure response, and eighty-nine percent is comfortable with these procedures. Students benefit from the care they receive in the GHS Health Office. (facility tour, nurses, self-study)

The GHS library/information services program is progressing toward full integration into the school's curriculum and instructional program. The library media center is a dated but well maintained area of the building where students can work with computers or complete academic work during study halls through a pass system or by coming in with a class. Up until this year, two library media specialists shared the responsibilities of maintaining an up-to-date collection, keeping track of all the changes in curriculum, collaborating with teachers on assignments and projects, teaching library media skills, and assisting teachers and students with technology. This fall, because of budget restrictions, one library media specialist assumed all of these responsibilities. Faculty members support the LMS and recently recognized her with the Collaboration Award in appreciation of her assistance. This positive relationship will help her as she continues to develop library media curriculum that aligns with 21<sup>st</sup> century standards. At this point, the formal library media curriculum includes only ninth grade students. Technology in the media center includes 25 computers, which soon will be replaced with laptops and 27 computers in the library computer lab. Icons on the desktops include a ProQuest subscription database on controversial topics, (SIRS), NewsBank, and ICONN. The LMS intends to purchase additional subscription databases in order to supplement her book resources and support new classes, e.g, global issues. Teachers' lessons and assignments are tracked in a log, and the LMS incorporates the Connecticut State Information Standards for Information Literacy into lessons. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Standards as well as the National Core Standard, which Connecticut has recently adopted will also be incorporated in future planning for collaborations with teachers. Sixty-three percent of students believes that the library has the materials they need. Some students in advanced placement courses, however, stated that they do not use the media center as they did as freshman students since laptop carts are now used in their classes. They do not usually visit the library to find books or to conduct research. In order to support students' needs across all four years and all course levels, the library media curriculum must be updated and developed into a four-year curriculum that aligns with the school's curriculum and academic standards. (LMS, students, Endicott Survey, self-study)

Library/information services personnel are knowledgeable about the curriculum and support its

implementation. The librarian is knowledgeable about the curriculum because she participates in the work of the curriculum development committee. She supports curriculum implementation by conducting developmental media lessons with all freshmen and collaborating with classroom teachers. The two non-instructional paraprofessionals often supervise students in the library. Eighty-five percent of the GHS staff agrees that the school library personnel are knowledgeable and able to assist them with their curriculum and instructional needs. (self-study, Endicott Survey, 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 to students and faculty members and is used to improve teaching and learning. Print sources for both academic and pleasure reading are designed to match varying student reading levels, including a variety of newspapers that are available on a daily basis and magazine subscriptions which address a wide field of interests. Professional magazines and books for teachers' educational and professional use are also available. In addition, the GHS Library contains over thirty thousand books. Although the nonfiction and reference area are extensive, there is little contemporary young adult fiction. Desktop resources and the Spectrum Card Catalog are available on every computer in the high school and on the teachers' laptops. Remote access to the Virtual Library is available to every student. All students have opportunities to use all of the school's software. In order to have access, students and parents must sign the acceptable use policy form. Other library equipment and services available to the GHS community include the use of video and digital cameras, scanners, and color and monochrome printers. VCRs, LCD projectors, DVD players, TVs, and CD players are also available. Some classrooms are fully equipped with computers, and each teacher has a laptop provided by the district. Library materials reflect the GHS ethnic and cultural diversity. Exhibits in display cases reflect a variety of events of historical and school-related significance. Closed-caption materials are provided for the hearing impaired. Students use a variety of programs available in computer labs that help them to improve reading, writing, and comprehension skills. Improvements in library technology are scheduled as part of the GHS aggressive five-year plan for technology as approved by the Guilford Board of Education. Although the library's reference and non-fiction collections are extensive, the library/media center lacks sufficient collection of young adult fiction for students with differing reading levels. ( library media specialist, self-study, review of collection)

GHS students, faculty, and support staff have regular access to library/information services, facilities, and programs as an integral part of their educational experience during the school day. The library media center is open daily from 7:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. The LMS is available every period of the day to assist students and collaborate with teachers. Students and parents have requested that the library hours be extended after school so that students have a place to study between the close of school and various rehearsals, practices and meetings of extra-curricular activities. Recently, students and faculty members have been using the media center more frequently than in the past few years; consequently, the media specialist, building leaders, the superintendent, and architects met last year to discuss design ideas for a new, expanded media center. Students would benefit from additional time after school to support homework assignments and research. (self-study, LMS, staff interviews)

The library/information services program at GHS fosters some independent inquiry by enabling students and faculty members to use various school and community information resources and technologies. The LMS is knowledgeable in technology and easily assists teachers in using

devices such as SMARTBoards, scanners, copiers, digital cameras, DVD players, and Flipcameras. She also assists students in locating appropriate and relevant resources for their research. All students receive a media center orientation in their freshman year that introduces them to subscription databases, the print collection, the online catalog, and the other resources that would be helpful in the students' academic endeavors, but student training does not formally extend beyond grade 9. Students may receive individual or small group support upon request, or individual teachers may arrange for their classes to receive training and assistance related to specific subjects. Consequently, additional training beyond grade 9 is sporadic. GHS students would benefit from a written, up-to-date library media curriculum that aligns with the school's academic curriculum and instructional program for grades 9-12 that would provide them with the skills necessary to become independent 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. (LMS, teachers, students, self-study)

Policies are in place for the selection and removal of information resources and the use of technologies and the Internet. GHS has an acceptable use policy for computer Internet access that has been approved by the board of education. Students, parents, and faculty and staff members must sign the policy indicating that they will abide by the policy conditions. The survey shows 82 percent of students knows the school policies regarding the use of the Internet. The book collection is inventoried each year, and selections are made based on teacher requests and professional book reviews. Purchasing and incorporating new materials for the library involves a series of steps. Various review resources are consulted to determine the quality of the purchase as well as its relevance to subject area curriculum. Weeding steps include evaluating the use of the item, its physical condition, and its relevance to the curriculum. Discarding materials involves steps that are the reverse of the purchasing steps which include removing all ID tags, desensitizing the materials, and removing the item from the GHS and statewide systems. If a Guilford resident challenges any book selection in the library collection, there is a form that must be filled out that includes a description of the concerns. Policies are currently in place for the selection and removal of the GHS Library Media Center information resources. However, other than a written form, there is no procedure in place for book challenges as when a community member wishes to have a book pulled from the library. Also, the Request for Reconsideration of Educational Materials policy dated November 22, 1999 has not been updated recently. (Endicott Survey, evidence box, self-study)

The school provides special education services related to the identification, monitoring, and referral of students in accordance with local, state, and federal laws. GHS complies with the requirements of the Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and follows all state and federal guidelines regarding special needs students. A student can be referred to special education by a parent, guardian, student (age 18+), a written referral through the student's guidance counselor, or an SRBI referral with notice to and consent by parent/guardian. Special education case managers are required to complete quarterly progress goal reporting forms which are mailed out to parents and filed in school. Special education students are monitored by pupil services at the central office and the special education department's Professional Learning Community (PLC). Student schedules are specifically designed to allow time for students and case managers to meet on a regular basis throughout the school week. The special education department functions effectively, in accordance with local, state, and federal laws. (self-study, guidance counselors, support services staff members)

## **Commendations**

1. The safe environment for students and staff members in the guidance department, special education department, and the nurse's office
2. The co-taught math and social studies classes for teaching special education students in a regular classroom
3. The collaboration of the speech and language therapist, the two school social workers, and the school psychologist with the special education department and mainstream classrooms
4. The collaboration between the library media specialist and the faculty members
5. The quality service to students, faculty, and parents provided by the special education department
6. The math lab that is accessible to all students
7. The monitoring of the PPTs meeting times and dates and PPT invitation by the special education secretary
8. The immediate response by support personnel to student referrals for services
9. The *Naviance* computer program that complements counselors' daily developmental guidance lessons
10. The availability of closed-caption materials for students with hearing impairments

## **Recommendations**

1. Provide ample time for special education and mainstream teachers to plan together for collaborating in the classroom
2. Develop and implement a formal evaluation process for all support services
3. Display a link on the school's homepage directly to the media center's homepage for more effective communication
4. Provide data warehousing that will allow the storage of records of graduates according to state law

5. Fully integrate library information skills into the school's curriculum plan 9-12
6. Provide access to the library media center after school hours to provide support to students

## 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 students 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.

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

### Conclusions

Guilford High School (GHS) engages students and families as partners in students' education and encourages participation through various programs and activities. To facilitate home and school communication, parents are encouraged to become involved in programs like GHS Connections, a parent group that meets monthly to discuss school issues and gather information. There are also booster clubs for music, athletics, and theater that offer the opportunity for parents to help support these programs. Parents who were interviewed cite the many opportunities for their involvement at GHS. They commend the level and quality of communication among administrators, parents, and students. Communication vehicles such as *PowerSchool* and *Naviance* as well as the availability of assignments online are noted by students and parents. The AlertNow program provides parents with information regarding sudden school closings. All agree that the school environment is welcoming and inspiring. Students express their comfort in addressing concerns with the administrators or the professionals in the student affairs center. In addition, parents are kept informed about the services and programs available to students through the Principal's Newsletter, student handbook, and the course catalog. As a result of the partnerships formed between parents and the school, GHS students benefit from a strong support network. (parents, central office administrators, self-study)

Guilford High School fosters productive business/ community/ higher education partnerships. The Guilford Fund for Education (GFFE), a community-based fundraising organization designed to improve educational opportunities for students, awards grants to students and teachers that have totaled more than \$100,000. The capstone project pilot, through which students enhance an in-school experience or pursue an area of interest in the community, provides an authentic learning experience for students. Community members become advisors to the capstone project students, work as part of the youth mentoring program, and routinely work with students to complete their required twenty hours of community service as mandated by graduation requirements. The GHS Vocational Instruction Program (VIP) program works with special education students and their transition from high school to the workplace. Gateway Community College programs, Saturday seminars at Yale University, University of Connecticut Early College Experience (ECE), the Education Center for the Arts (ECA), and the *Naviance* network provide additional opportunities for students to explore interests, careers, and investigate higher education partnerships. These school/community partnerships help to provide avenues for community input and help students connect with the community and enhance their education. (teachers, self-study, central office administrators)

The current school site and plant do not adequately support all aspects of the educational program and the support services for student learning. While funding for a new school has been denied in referendum, long-range plans continue as officials meet with architects to discuss renovation/addition designs and costs. A successful June 2011 referendum is a current goal. GHS faculty members complete a *Tools for Schools* survey each year to address health and

safety concerns in their classrooms, and the maintenance staff conducts a full walk-through every five years. Items of immediate concern are a lack of storage space, small rooms or offices that do not meet student or staff needs, and a lack of privacy in counseling areas. Despite a May 2008 indoor air quality report that returned “minimal amounts of identifiable fungi,” numerous faculty members express concerns regarding temperature, mold, air flow, and air quality. Furthermore, many classrooms lack working blinds that would allow teachers to darken rooms and avoid glare for video presentations or keep sunlight from affecting student vision. Faculty and staff members indentified challenges created by the building layout. Many are concerned by overcrowded classrooms, congested hallways, and the distance visitors need to travel through the building for meetings in various offices. The school conducts lock down drills at least twice each year, and procedures regarding school security are in place and understood by faculty members; however, students travel freely through many open, propped, and unlocked doors throughout the sprawling campus. Students, teachers, and maintenance staff members admirably address the challenges presented by the facility; however, if the current situations described above continue, many negative effects on teaching and learning are unavoidable. (facility tour, teachers, school support staff)

The physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. GHS meets all applicable codes for a building of its age because such compliance does not require the physical plant to meet the current codes and standards for newly-constructed buildings. All building systems are inspected as required by law. Status reports regarding systems are continually updated and housed in the main office or central office. The building administrators and the head custodian inspect the building daily and address any concerns expeditiously. Maintenance and custodial staff members make repairs when in-house inspections reveal problems. When code violations are detected, immediate steps are taken to correct them. When necessary, outside contractors are scheduled to address special problems. In 1999, at the completion of the last major addition, the building was granted a certificate of occupancy and met all ADA building codes required at that time. The GHS facility currently operates under these codes. The Chemical Hygiene Plan is complete and Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) are present in science classrooms. Five of the fourteen science teachers teach in different classrooms and use carts to transport lab materials and classroom supplies. The transporting of science materials from room to room creates concerns regarding the safe handling of materials and the possibility of accidents. As a result of the efforts and cooperation of administrators, custodians, and maintenance staff members, students have a safe learning environment that meets all applicable federal and state laws. (self-study, facility tour, board of education)

Equipment is maintained and replaced when appropriate; but cataloging of equipment is inconsistent. GHS follows a work order system to address all equipment repairs. Faculty and staff members complete work orders that are sent to the director of operations for in-house repairs by one of the four full-time district maintenance personnel (HVAC, electrician, grounds management, and carpenter) and they are addressed in a timely manner. Unsafe and/or broken classroom fixtures are quickly repaired or removed. Some equipment is outdated and requires special order parts and/or a contractor. There is currently little or no cataloging of equipment; however, school officials are currently working to create a process of assessing resources. Elevators, boilers, and other essential equipment receive regular maintenance; and the elevators are inspected and maintained per state requirements. Audio visual equipment for building use is

catalogued and distributed by the Information Technology Team (ITT) and the media center. Equipment owned by individual departments is catalogued through department chair persons. GHS students and teachers benefit from the attention provided by all those responsible for the up-keep and maintenance of the facility and equipment. (self-study, infrastructure tour, support staff)

GHS has a program of building and site management that provides appropriate maintenance, repair, and cleanliness of the school plant. All students, parents, and staff members commend GHS for its clean, well-maintained facility. The head custodian and director of operations work closely with the principal for site management. Maintenance requests are completed in a timely manner, but repairs are sometimes delayed because of other financial priorities. There is a plan in place for regular and routine inspection and upkeep. A majority of school staff members concur that the school is clean and well-maintained. As a result of the diligence of the custodial staff and a well-planned program to address on-going maintenance, faculty members and students teach and learn in a clean, safe facility that contributes to a positive school climate. (facility tour, Endicott Survey, student shadowing, teacher interviews)

At GHS, there is ongoing planning to address future programs, enrollment changes, staffing, facility, and technology needs as well as capital improvements. There are frequent meetings between staff and administrators to make plans for future programs. Teachers reflect on conditions and student needs in their classrooms and relay information to department chairs, main office staff, and central office staff. Teachers are open to initiate new programs and activities. A mentoring program and faculty advisory council were formed based on staff suggestions. Council members are elected by the staff to address school climate and student concerns. *PowerSchool* is the primary student data management system. It is used by faculty members for attendance, grading, scheduling, and enrollment. This program is used to monitor staffing needs and project enrollment changes. Guilford Public Schools has a five-year staffing plan, started in 2009 and ending in 2014. District-wide budgetary meetings are held annually and on an as-needed basis with teams of administrators, teachers, parents, students, and community members to determine future programs, enrollment changes, staffing, facility, and technology needs. Proposed technology needs are addressed through the five-year technology plan. Ongoing plans are underway to implement technology in the curriculum. Technology is embedded into subject area curriculum documents, and teachers are encouraged to become trainers for peers concerning the use of technology. At this time, 2.5 million dollars have been allocated to technology throughout the district. All high school teachers are provided laptops to integrate technology into their lessons and facilitate communication with students, parents, and other teachers. The five-year capital improvement plan bases its improvements on the life cycle of the infrastructure and equipment in the building. Administrators and the head custodian report needed capital improvements to the director of facilities who meets monthly with the facilities subcommittee and the district finance director. There are plans in place to address the renovation of the high school building. The board of education plans to meet with architects soon to discuss schematic designs for a building renovation/addition. Procedures are in place to ensure that the long-term needs of GHS students and staff members will be met in the foreseeable future. (central office administrators, self-study, teachers)

The community and the district's governing body ensures 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. Numerous interviews with teachers and administrators reveal that the funding is adequate, although there have been ongoing reductions. While many teachers state that the necessary tools for student learning are adequate, it is common for some teachers to purchase needed classroom materials, including textbooks. Currently, only 27.9 percent of faculty members agrees that the budget is adequate to meet professional and instructional needs. Teachers and administrators express their needs for a higher level of support and, especially, for a more up-to-date facility to support student learning. However, two previous referenda to support the construction of a new facility have failed to pass. Despite the disappointing results of the latest referendum, the community supports GHS and helps the district to provide necessary funding for a well-developed school program that supports students in their achievement of the expectations for student learning. (Endicott Survey, teachers, administrators)

Faculty members and building administrators have active involvement in the budgetary process, including its development and implementation. Developing the budget is a lengthy process that begins in October when the principal meets with department chairpersons. Department chairpersons share information from meetings with faculty members and make budgetary requests based on student learning needs. For the past four years, a partial budget freeze was used to provide for unexpected expenses. This budget freeze procedure creates difficulties for teachers in planning for spending and influences some teacher requests because in the past the budget focused only on necessities. Consequently, some teachers are reluctant to order items they believe will not be granted. Custodians provide budgetary input to the director of operations. In January, the principal presents the school budget to the district leadership team, chaired by the superintendent. This team revises the school budget and presents the final version to the board of education in the late winter. The board of finance sends the town and school budgets with a recommendation to referendum. The special education budget is formulated separately from the school budget under the guidance of the director of pupil services. The principal maintains ongoing communication with department heads regarding the status of budget allocations throughout the school year. Information is relayed to teachers via department chairs. The involvement of the faculty members and administrators in the budget process is driven by student needs and supports expectations for student learning. (teachers, central office administrators, self-study)

### **Commendations**

1. The community partnerships and connections between the school and community
2. The school's communication with parents regarding school programs and activities
3. The support and leadership of parent organizations to provide materials, supplies, and equipment
4. The caring atmosphere created by Guilford High School teachers, administrators, and staff members

5. The school programs and services that foster a high level of parent satisfaction
6. The support the board of education provides to the school and students
7. The repair, maintenance, and cleanliness of the building to ensure that students have a pleasant and safe environment for learning
8. The provision of technology to support teaching and learning
9. The active involvement of faculty members and administrators in the budget development process

### **Recommendations**

1. Continue to engage in systemic long-range planning that anticipates the consequences and demands of a deteriorating facility
2. Develop a plan to catalogue equipment for inventory, repair, and maintenance
3. Address air quality and temperature concerns throughout the building
4. Address potential safety concerns due to scheduling in the science department
5. Explore and implement creative solutions to problems with hallway congestion, lack of storage space, inadequate office space, lack of privacy in counseling areas, lack of room-darkening shades, problems with air quality and variations in temperature created by the layout and condition of the building
6. Examine and address the safety concerns created by unsecured doors that allow easy access to the school by members of the public without screening procedures
7. Address the issues that arise from budget freezes and teachers' plans for budget requests

## ***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 Guilford 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 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 Guilford High School submit routine Two- and Five-Year Progress Reports documenting the current status of all evaluation report recommendations, with particular detail provided for any recommendation which may have been rejected or those items on which no action has been taken. In addition, responses must be detailed on all recommendations highlighted by the Commission in its notification letters to the school. School officials are expected to have completed or be in the final stages of completion of all valid visiting committee recommendations by the time the Five-Year Progress Report is submitted. The Commission may request additional Special Progress Reports if one or more of the Standards are not being met in a satisfactory manner or if additional information is needed on matters relating to evaluation report recommendations or substantive changes in the school.

To ensure that it has current information about the school, the Commission has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Commission within sixty days (60) of occurrence any substantive change which negatively impacts the school's adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The report of substantive change must describe the change itself and detail any impact which the change has had on the school's ability to meet CPSS Standards. The Commission's Substantive Change Policy is included in the Appendix on page 78. All other substantive changes should be included in the Two- and Five-Year Progress Reports and/or the Annual Report which is required of each member school to ensure that the Commission office has current statistical data on the school.

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

The visiting committee would like to thank the students, parents, faculty, and staff members of Guilford High School for their hospitality and assistance during our visit to the school. We must commend the professionalism of the faculty and staff members and the commitment to learning evident throughout Guilford High School.

## **SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY**

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

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

**APPENDIX A**

**ROSTER OF VISITING TEAM MEMBERS**

**Guilford High School**

<b>Name</b>	<b>School District</b>	<b>Position</b>
Elaine B. Bessette		Chair
Ruth C. Gilbert-Whitner	Whitman-Hanson Regional District Whitman, MA.	Assistant Chair
Monica L. Kreuzer	Watertown High School Watertown, CT.	
Margaret M. Lasek	Stratford High School Stratford, CT.	
Robert Kovi	Mark T. Sheehan High School Wallingford, CT.	
Kathleen Gavigan	East Haven High School East Haven, CT.	
Christen Bertz	Coginchaug Regional High School Durham, CT.	
Nicole Henderson	Stafford High School Stafford Springs, CT.	
Cathleen M. Line	Cromwell High School Cromwell, CT.	
Kathleen M. Murphy	Wilby High School Waterbury, CT.	
Luzviminda A. Antonio	Newington High School Newington, CT.	
Mary Ellen Minichiello	Milford Public Schools Milford, CT.	

Kevin D. Case

Canton Public Schools  
Canton, CT.

Maureen Cohen

Grafton High School  
Grafton, MA.

Thomas Jockers

Darien High School  
Darien, CT.