

# **New England Association of Schools and Colleges**



**Commission on Public Secondary Schools**

## **Report of the Visiting Committee for Seekonk High School**

**Seekonk, Massachusetts  
April 13 - 16, 2008**

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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 Seekonk 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 Seekonk High School in terms of the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. Neither the total report nor any of its subsections is to be considered an evaluation of any individual staff member but rather a professional appraisal of the school as it appeared to the visiting team.

### **INTRODUCTION**

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

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

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

#### Teaching and Learning Standards

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

#### Support Teaching and Learning Standards

- Leadership and Organization
- School Resources for Learning
- Community Resources for Learning

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

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

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At Seekonk High School, a committee of nine members, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned all teachers and administrators in the school to appropriate subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities and facilities available for young people. In addition to faculty members, the self-study committees included: eleven students; three community members; five parents; three instructional aides; one custodian; one school nurse; and one central office administrator.

The self-study of Seekonk High School extended over a period of twenty school months from fall, 2006 to spring, 2008. The visiting committee was pleased to note that students, instructional aides, central office administration, pupil personnel support staff, custodial staff, parents, and community members joined the professional staff in the self-study deliberations.

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

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

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

A visiting committee of fourteen evaluators was assigned by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate the Seekonk High School. The Committee members spent four days in Seekonk, 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 from several states and vocational institutions diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Seekonk High School.

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

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

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

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

### **Overview of Findings**

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

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

During meetings with the board of education, parents, teachers, and students, it was clear that all participants knew, understood, and supported the mission of Seekonk High School. There is a clear commitment on the part of all members of the Seekonk High School community to the improvement of student learning. All aspects of school life at Seekonk connect to and/or support the mission. The mission shapes the culture of this school. The work on expectations for student learning, assessments to measure student progress toward meeting those expectations, and the development of rubrics to define the standards of performance has been intentional and focused. There is work to do in order to better align curricula to the expectations for student learning; but the math and science curricula provide a good model. The newly hired Curriculum Coordinator must support the strong efforts of the principal in this area. Seekonk High School has demonstrated its commitment to developing curriculum and improving instruction with the establishment of common planning sessions for teachers.

The staff, however, faces important and significant challenges. It must ask and answer some critical questions. Do all the academic, civic, and social expectations for students receive appropriate attention in *all* courses for *all* students? Is the method of grouping students at Seekonk High school in keeping with recommendations supported by NEASC and current educational theory? While the administration and faculty are clearly willing to accept challenges, there is a need for the faculty to regularly engage in a variety of professional development opportunities to provide them the best tools to address the issues of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Will the new, existing, or revised curriculum be integrated across disciplines? What strategies will be necessary to enable *all* students to engage in higher order thinking skills and achieve high academic, civic, and social expectations? The common planning sessions that are built into the school day are an excellent forum for small groups of teachers to meet together to formulate their answers. Teachers and students are best served when those sessions are devoted exclusively for adult conversations about teaching and learning.

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

The principal of Seekonk High School has immersed herself in all aspects of the school and has outlined a rigorous vision for the school which is embedded in the school improvement plan. She is positioned to map and monitor the progress of Seekonk High School as it moves to achieve all aspects of the mission and expectations for student learning. Her vision and leadership are critical to continued improvement of the school. Central office administration must continue to give her latitude, full autonomy, and substantial financial support to continue the important work the school community has begun. Academic and personal success for all students is a clear priority at Seekonk High School. The student support services are invested in the mission of Seekonk High School and have developed programs such as the Teacher Support Team, BEST, and community service. The revised Performance-Based Project enhances the students' academic, civic, and social development. Seekonk High School is a safe, welcoming, and comfortable place for adults and students to engage in the teaching and learning process. The community takes pride in its school; but now must address the fact that the school, in order to reach its' full potential, must have financial support that has, in the past, been lacking. The school sees the need to incorporate 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into curricula, yet has not received funding to update technology in several years.

The quality of the Seekonk Public Schools and the quality of the students who emerge from those schools will, to a very large degree, determine the economic future of the Town of Seekonk. The answers to the questions that have been posed along with the manner in which the recommendations of the visiting committee are implemented will determine the future of Seekonk High School's ability to meet the needs of its' students. This blueprint for change will also provide a leadership challenge for the board of education, the central office administration, the principal, the leadership team, the faculty, and the staff for the foreseeable future. If these key stakeholder groups can work together in a collegial manner to fulfill the school improvement plan, then the Seekonk High School Mission and Expectations for Student Learning will become a vibrant reality for all.

# Seekonk High School

## Mission and Expectations 2007-2008

**Mission: All students will achieve their maximum potential by becoming responsible, productive citizens and life-long learners.**

### Academic Expectations

The student will:

**Communicate** effectively using

- **Writing** for a variety of purposes and audiences that
  - Engages the audience
  - Constructs a clear thesis
  - Uses supporting evidence
  - Uses appropriate language
- **Speaking** for a variety of purposes and audiences that
  - Engages the audience
  - Establishes focus
  - Adapts tone and style
  - Develops and connects ideas

**Read** effectively and critically to

- Summarize/paraphrase information
- Analyze information
- Draw inferences and make connections

Use a variety of **Problem Solving** strategies effectively to

- Identify and describe the problem
- Collect, interpret, organize and analyze data
- Draw conclusions/Find solutions Use

**Technology** effectively to

- Acquire information
- Organize information
- Communicate information

### Civic Expectations

*The student will:*

- Demonstrate a strong sense of community by participating in a variety of school and community programs
- Demonstrate knowledge of their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society

### Social Expectations

*The student will:*

- Demonstrate an understanding of diverse cultures and ideas
- Establish cooperative and healthy relationships with others
- Demonstrate respect for self, peers, staff, and others
- Demonstrate honesty, integrity, and personal responsibility

## **School and Community Profile**

### **The Community**

The town of Seekonk is a community located on the Massachusetts/ Rhode Island border. It is a bedroom community for the greater Providence, Rhode Island, and Boston, Massachusetts, metropolitan areas. The town is readily accessible by Interstate Route 195 State Routes 152 and 44, as well as U.S. Route 6. The town was incorporated in 1812. One tradition indicates that the town name derives from the Algonquin language meaning "black goose," despite the fact that there are several other "Seekonks" located in the Ohio Valley.

According to the 2000 Town Census, the town population is 13,425, and most recent reports have the population listed at 14,377. The town has no identifiable minority comprising more than 2% of the town's population. English is the primary language of the town with Portuguese spoken at home by some families. The town's median income was listed as \$56,364 based on the 2000 Town Census.

The majority of the population in Seekonk is employed in some professional capacity. Approximately 26% of Seekonk residents aged twenty-five and over hold a bachelor's or advanced college degree. The town does not currently meet the state mandates for subsidized housing. Numerous restaurants, major national retailers, and automobile dealerships line Routes 6 and 44, located in the southern part of the town, and are frequented by consumers from Massachusetts and Rhode Island. There is little manufacturing in Seekonk, but there are relatively large cinema entertainment venues, as well as a seasonal business known as "The Seekonk Speedway." This influx of business has been going on for over thirty years. Overall, the town of Seekonk has changed from a small, rural agricultural community to a suburban bedroom community. This continuing trend has strained the school district as well as town services. At this point, 52% of the local property tax is

allocated to the schools. The town's unemployment rate is 5.8% and, as of 2006, just 1.7% of the families in the school community had incomes below the poverty level.

According to the October 2006 State Report, the total student population of the district is 2,246. Of particular note is the fact that one of Seekonk's three elementary schools, North Elementary, was forced to close in September 2006 due to budget constraints. This closure changed the district from a 5-school configuration to a 4-school configuration. These budget cuts also cost forty staff members their jobs as well as producing the inevitable shift in personnel through the "bumping" process throughout the school system. Outside of the 720 students who attend Seekonk High School, 550 attend Hurley Middle School, 472 attend Aitkin Elementary School, and 504 attend Martin Elementary School.

There are three Pre-K and kindergarten independent schools located in the district, as well as the pre-school program offered at Seekonk High School, and one independent elementary school, Seekonk Christian Academy. The school district has a partnership with two other public high schools as well. One is Tri-County Regional Vocational and Technical High School in Franklin, Massachusetts, and the other is Bristol County Agricultural High School in Dighton, Massachusetts. Seven percent of the district's high school aged students attend these schools. The district is also a member of the South Coast Educational Collaborative, along with the Berkley, Dighton-Rehoboth, Fall River, Somerset, and Swansea school districts. In addition, 10% of the district's high school aged students attend private schools.

In terms of per pupil expenditure, the Seekonk School District spends \$6,577 per pupil in Regular Education, well below the state average of \$7,421. The district spends \$16,407 per pupil in Special Education, above the state average of \$14,643. There are currently no students in the district who participate in school choice.

### **The School and the Students**

Seekonk High School includes students in grades 9-12 and has a total enrollment of 720 students. Both the school enrollment and the ethnic, cultural, and racial composition of the student body have remained stable over the past ten years. The school's African-American population is 1.2%, the school's Asian population is 1.6% and the school's Hispanic population is 1.3% of the total student enrollment. Seekonk High School's student attendance rate is 95.1%, while the student dropout rate is 1.4%. The average attendance rate among teachers at Seekonk High School is 92.95%, including long-term medical leaves and absences due to professional development activities.

There are forty-nine teachers at Seekonk High School and the average student to teacher ratio is 15.3 to 1. Individual teachers carry an average student load of 88.5 students with an average class size of 21.86. Seekonk High employs a 7-period rotating modified block schedule with five 65-minute teaching periods a day. There is one period per 7-day cycle retained as a Common Planning period for teachers, and one period per cycle put aside for Professional Development.

The primary feeder school for Seekonk High School is Seekonk's Hurley Middle School. There are five Rhode Island based Catholic parochial parish schools that also send Seekonk resident students to Seekonk High School upon graduation from the eighth grade. There are currently only four non-resident students attending Seekonk High. Two are the children of staff members and are eligible to attend under the collective bargaining agreement between the teacher's association and the school district.

Two levels of science courses are offered at Seekonk High School, an honors level and a regular level. In addition, the Science department offers Advanced Placement Biology. The Social Studies department offers Advanced Placement courses in United States and European History, as well as honors level and college prep level courses at all grade levels. The newly aligned Mathematics department course offerings fall into three levels, honors, college and a fundamental level, as well as an Advanced Placement

course in Calculus. There are honors level courses for Spanish but not for French and Portuguese course offerings. The English department offers students three levels of study at each grade level. In each of the ninth, tenth and eleventh grades, students may choose between Honors, College and Standard levels. As seniors, the choices become Advanced Placement, Honors and English 12. There are currently several "Performance Based" courses offered on a semester basis. All departments, including Technology, Wellness, Fine Arts, and Physical Education, have elective course offerings that have suffered due to staffing problems associated with budget cuts that have occurred year to year at Seekonk High School. The number of these course offerings change every year due to these constraints and make student scheduling extremely difficult.

Over 60% of the student body is currently enrolled in upper level courses. The 7.3% of the students enrolled in special education classes are involved in a small learning group known as the Learning Center, which helps students with an Individualized Educational Plan to develop strategies for academic and social success. The BEST (Behavioral Educational Social Therapeutic) program has similar goals. There are only three ELL (English Language Learners) students, representing only .42% of the student body.

Test results of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) show that Seekonk High School students have made steady progress. Seventy-nine of the students tested in 2006 fell into the Advanced and Proficient levels in English, ahead of the state average of 69%. The same test showed 61% of the students fell into the Advanced and Proficient levels in Mathematics (an 8% increase), slightly behind the state average of 67%. The number of students who have had to re-take the MCAS because of a "deficient" rating has steadily dropped in both Math and English. Test results for the new SAT of 2006 reflect the overall trend in Massachusetts, a decline in test scores for the first time in fifteen years. The school's Critical Reading Mean of 493 is below the state

average of 513 and the national average of 502. The school's Math Mean of 489 is below the state average of 524 and the national average of 518. The school's Writing Mean of 477 is below the state average of 510 and the national average of 497.

Seekonk High School offers a variety of extra-curricular activities including 20 varsity, 15 junior varsity and 6 freshmen sports teams on a user-fee basis. The school offers over 25 clubs and activities. Besides being recognized for superior academic work and achievement through the publishing of High Honor Roll members and Honor Roll members, outstanding athletic achievement is also recognized in local newspapers and at individual sports banquets. Student improvement and random acts of kindness are rewarded by the issuance of Pride Cards mailed by individual teachers to the student's home. Seekonk's Marching, Concert and Jazz band members have received several area and state awards. The school's Drama Club has consistently produced critically praised plays. A weekly parent e-mail newsletter written by the school principal recognizes student achievement in every area of the school's programs. There is a student newspaper and a student-produced Television News program (STV News), disseminated over the school's closed circuit educational channel, which highlight student achievement. Local organizations, such as the Daughters of American Revolution, the Lions Club, the Rotary Club and Veterans organizations, have hailed student achievement and citizenship through awards and scholarships.

In the Seekonk class of 2006, 65% of the graduates attended four-year colleges, with 25% enrolling in two-year colleges, 3% enrolling in technical schools, 6% joining the work force, and 1% entering the military.

Although there are currently no school-business partnerships or joint ventures, there is a relationship between Seekonk High School and New England Tech in Warwick, Rhode Island. New England Tech has extended many invitations for students to visit its nearby campus. Currently Seekonk High School has an Early Enrollment partnership with Rhode Island College where certain high school offerings can count as work in that

school.

Seekonk High School has had several school initiatives to increase student learning reflecting the school goals which include improvement in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Professional development has been offered in rubric design and authentic assessment. Staff members have developed school-wide rubrics and are implementing these rubrics to assess student work. The development of departmental common exams for mid-terms and finals has progressed from a small common percentage last year to 50%. Staff members from different disciplines have begun to use Common Planning periods to look at student work on these exams, and to exchange ideas about topics like curriculum mapping, analytical rubric assessment, lesson plans, responsibility rubric assessment, and report card comments.

Curriculum realignment continues this year. During the 2005-2006 school year, the mathematics curriculum was realigned K-12. The science curriculum was revised in 2006-2007. A considerable amount of work during 2006-007 by staff members has produced a revised Mission Statement. Finally an initiative to re-instate service learning requirements has resulted in a twenty-five hour community service component added to the graduation requirements for the class of 2009.

### **School Improvement Planning**

A comprehensive process is in effect to ensure and monitor school improvement at Seekonk High School. With the aid of staff members and students, a Five-Year District Strategic Plan was designed. Seekonk High School's School Improvement Plan is developed after an examination of student data and student work and is aligned with the district's plan. The Seekonk School Council includes parents, staff, and students and meets monthly to review and improve school improvement efforts based on the Mission

Statement and the School Improvement Plan.

The goals of the School Improvement plan target five improvement areas. The first is the provision for students with multiple opportunities to practice and achieve Seekonk High's academic expectations, the second is the alignment of curriculum to national and state curriculum frameworks, the third is the improvement of opportunities for professional development that is research-based, the fourth is the promotion of self-respect and respect for others, and the fifth area of improvement is the strengthening of communication between the school and the community.

The revision of the Mission Statement, the development and implementation of school-wide rubrics, the development and analysis of common mid-year and final exams, the realignment of both the mathematics and science curriculums, the implementation of the community service requirement for the class of 2009. and the continued dissemination of the school's mission, expectations and rubrics all speak to the progress made in all five areas.

Other strategies such as increased course offerings and a procedure for aligning and granting professional development for staff members speak to the "work in progress" nature of the School Improvement process.

Critical Challenges:

- The failure of the community to consistently fund the ever increasing needs of its students.
- The loss of course offerings.
- Despite all the emphasis on curriculum, the school has only recently hired a

Director of Curriculum and Instruction and, at this time, has only tentative plans for the reinstatement of Department Head positions that were lost nearly ten years ago.

- The instability of jobs and shifts in personnel make the need for a State-Mandated Mentoring Program all the more paramount.
- The lack of funds makes the school goals surrounding Professional Development tenuous.

**School and Community Profile Committee Members**

Fred Crippen, English, (Co-Chair Steering Committee, Chairperson)

Ed Cunard, Guidance

Dr. Phyllis Dupere, Mathematics

Joan Mullen, Administration (non return)

Fred Nelson, Retired Administrator

Monica Piquette, Technology

Dr. Gil Woodside, Social Studies (retired)

# 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

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**1**

**MISSION AND EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT  
LEARNING**

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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.

## Conclusions

The mission and expectations for student learning of Seekonk High School were developed by the school community and have been approved and supported by the faculty, administration, and school committee. The mission underwent an extensive review process involving the entire Seekonk learning community. Input was solicited from parents, students, community members, faculty members, administrators, and school committee members. The revised mission was disseminated to parents and the community. The mission is posted in the school and on the school website, and it is printed in key school documents, including the student handbook, the program of studies, and course syllabi. The mission's targeted levels for student achievement are prominently displayed in classrooms. Thus the Seekonk school community demonstrates ownership of the mission, making it a vital force for the improvement of the school. (self-study, teachers, panel presentation)

The Seekonk High School Mission Statement represents the fundamental values and beliefs held by the school community. The extensive revision process assured that all stakeholders played a role in identifying community values regarding education. Some expectations in the mission were gleaned from a 1998 version of the mission and the faculty input resulted in the mission's emphasis on student responsibility. The resulting mission statement truly fits the Seekonk school community. (self-study, teachers, mission committee)

The school has defined academic, civic, and social expectations that are measurable and that reflect the school's mission. These expectations are stated in key school documents, including the student handbook, the faculty handbook, and the program of studies. The academic expectations and their accompanying rubrics clearly indicate what every Seekonk student should know and do by the time of graduation. The civic and social expectations emphasize student responsibility in the school and in the community. The academic, social, and civic expectations focus the school community on its mission of enabling students to achieve "their maximum potential by becoming responsible, productive citizens and life-long learners." (self-study, teachers, mission statement, principal, school committee, students, panel presentation)

Each academic expectation in the mission has a targeted level of successful achievement delineated in school-wide rubrics. These rubrics are printed in the student handbook. The rubric for each expectation has four levels. The third level, "Meets the standard", is the target for successful achievement. The targeted levels are prominently posted in classrooms. As a result of the measured and targeted levels in the school-wide rubrics, Seekonk has a means to assess student and school success in achieving the academic expectations that are stated in the mission. (teachers, school-wide rubrics, students, panel presentation)

The school has begun to establish some indicators for assessing the social and civic expectations. Report cards indicate how individual students perform on a responsibility rubric. The school has begun to compile data from this rubric to indicate how the student body as a whole fares in terms of responsibility. The data appears in a document titled Responsibility Rubric Comment Distribution. Beginning in 2009, twenty-five hours of community service will be a graduation requirement. The guidance department bears responsibility for determining whether seniors meet the required number of hours. Some expectations such as one regarding participation in a "variety of school and community programs" do not have assessment indicators. Nor is there yet a comprehensive system of numeric indicators for assessing civic and social expectations of the school to provide feedback to the school community and to inform revision of the school's educational program. (mission committee, self-study, panel presentation)

The mission statement and the school's expectations for student learning guide the procedures, policies, and decisions of the school and are evident in the school culture. For example, the school committee and principal support the mission through their budget proposals. Addition of course sections, reduction in class size, implementation of an

attendance policy, and the use of common assessments foster the opportunity for students to “achieve their maximum potential.” The athletic program’s focus on good sportsmanship reflects the mission’s emphasis on civic and social responsibility. Teachers deliberately model for students responsible citizenship and life-long learning. In addition, increased use of school-wide rubrics in the classroom is evidence that the mission is becoming part of the school culture. Consequently, Seekonk High School is on the path to becoming a school in which critical decision-making, student learning, and student responsibility are mission-driven. (school committee, principal, teachers, students, parents)

Seekonk has outlined a procedure for the school community to regularly review and revise the mission statement. A yearly review of the mission will take place each September. Input will be sought from the entire Seekonk learning community. The review process will be informed by the results of a survey of staff and students. If revision of the mission is needed, a committee will be established for this purpose. However, the school has not yet determined the types of data that will be analyzed in reviewing and revising the mission and has not assigned responsibility for the process. Thus Seekonk needs to further delineate the process for reviewing and revising the mission. (evidence documents, mission self-study committee, administrators)

### **Commendations**

1. Internalization of the mission by virtually the entire professional and support staffs and the student body
2. Exemplary school-wide rubrics that are published on the NEASC website
3. The extensive review and revision of the mission that produced a document that truly fits the Seekonk school community
4. The adoption of a formal plan to annually review and revise the mission and expectations including representatives from all elements of the school community
5. The use of the mission in guiding the decision-making in all aspects of school life

### **Recommendations**

1. Further delineate the mission review and revision process to include analysis of specific types of data and to assign responsibility for the process
2. Determine indicators for assessing achievement of all social and civic expectations
3. Establish a formal process to disseminate the results from the examination of data regarding all academic, social, and civic expectations

# 2

## TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

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### CURRICULUM

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

1. Each curriculum area shall identify those school-wide academic expectations for which it is responsible.
2. The curriculum shall be aligned with the school-wide academic expectations and shall ensure that all students have sufficient opportunity to practice and achieve each of those expectations.
3. The written curriculum shall:
  - prescribe content;
  - integrate relevant school-wide learning expectations;
  - identify course-specific learning goals;
  - suggest instructional strategies;
  - suggest assessment techniques including the use of school-wide rubrics.
4. The curriculum shall engage all students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking as well as provide opportunities for the authentic application of knowledge and skills.
5. The curriculum shall:
  - be appropriately integrated;
  - emphasize depth of understanding over breadth of coverage.
6. The school shall provide opportunities for all students to extend learning beyond the normal course offerings and the school campus.
7. There shall be effective curricular coordination and articulation between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district.
8. Instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, staffing levels, and the resources of the library / media center shall be sufficient to allow for the implementation of the curriculum.
9. The professional staff shall be actively involved in the ongoing development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum based on assessments of student performance in achieving the school's academic expectations and course-specific learning goals.
10. The school shall commit sufficient time, financial resources, and personnel to the development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum.
11. Professional development activities shall support the development and implementation of the curriculum.

### Conclusions

Seekonk High School has identified seven expectations for student learning, and each department has identified between two and four of the five academic expectations for student learning for which it is responsible except art and technology which have identified one expectation each. Faculty members collaborated to develop rubrics for each of the academic

expectations and for responsibility, which is related to social and civic expectations. These rubrics are printed in the student handbook and the program of studies, and the criteria for meeting the standards are posted in each classroom. They are also included or modified in the math and science curriculum documents. The expectations for student learning are used regularly for major projects and assignments, and less so for daily work. Faculty members are conscious of the expectations for which their department is responsible, but connections are not always made to the expectations in assignments. As a result of the school's efforts, the academic expectations have become part of the academic life of the school, but they have not yet become a consistent driving force in curricular and instructional decisions to the same degree as the mission statement. Programs such as chorus are not currently being offered because of previous budget cuts or a lack of a qualified instructor. This limits student access to some areas of interest and/or meeting academic expectations. (student work, classroom observations, teachers, self-study)

The math and science departments have aligned their curricula with school-wide academic expectations. The school and district have identified curriculum development as a top priority in their strategic plans, and the district has hired a K-12 curriculum coordinator effective July 1, 2008. After a ten-year absence, in the 2007-2008 school year the district reintroduced the position of department head for English, math, social sciences, science and world languages. Currently, teachers have been working on curriculum maps during professional development time and sometimes common planning periods; maps are in varying stages of completion but lack an explicit connection between expectations for student learning and course content, instructional methods, or assessment. Teachers have received some professional development in curriculum mapping and essential questions to support the development of these maps. A .2 literacy coach has worked with members of the social studies and science area to support content area reading and writing in those areas. Departments use a minimum of 50% common content on mid-year and final exams for all levels. Progress has been made, but the vast majority of work has yet to be done. There is a shortage of pre-vocational opportunities for students who are planning to enter vocational fields after graduation. The absence of aligned curriculum documents prevents the school from ensuring that all students have sufficient opportunity to practice and achieve the expectations. The curriculum should prescribe content, integrate relevant school-wide learning expectations, identify course-specific learning goals, suggest instructional strategies, and suggest assessment techniques including the use of school-wide rubrics. Thus the school's departments should use a common format for their formal curriculum development to ensure equity and completeness in all curricula. (student work, self-study, classroom observations)

The curriculum inconsistently engages students in challenging work providing inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills. Students at Seekonk High School are engaged in higher order thinking in assessments ranging from in-class activities to long-term projects, but several samples of student work demonstrate inconsistent use of inquiry, problem-solving and higher order thinking skills. In some instances, students have been asked to analyze information and develop their own interpretations of data while several large projects seem to go minimally beyond providing facts as final products. Several students cited the same teachers as providing a rigorous curriculum experience while equally finding other courses to be much less challenging. Students in honors classes are not always challenged beyond the expectations of the standard curriculum. The school does provide several honors levels courses as well as AP courses in various areas, but the lack of a curriculum in several areas has left a deficiency in the consistent application of inquiry, problem-solving and higher order thinking skills. (teachers, student work, samples of assignments)

Teachers have been provided encouragement and opportunities to integrate curriculum across disciplines with some emerging successes. They have also worked to realign curricula in several areas to increase depth over breadth. The implementation of cross-curricular activities is sporadic, but deliberate. The art department brought in a traveling art program for three weeks and successfully encouraged many teachers to integrate art into their classes. Some social studies teachers have worked with language arts teachers to improve writing. Teachers within departments do rely on the integration of cross-curricular content but not through directly

working with other departments. The faculty and administration have made some significant steps toward opening the door to improved cross-curricular activities. The school has spent significant time preparing and adjusting for the MCAS. This has resulted in teachers working to overcome a focus on breadth by rewriting curriculum for several freshman/sophomore courses to be covered over two years including an extended algebra program and two years of biology. Teachers have worked on curriculum maps for U. S. History and changed it to a two-year course. Thus, the integration of disciplines and an emphasis on depth of understanding are guidelines for developing curricula in all departments. (school leaders, self study, teachers)

Seekonk High School provides a variety of opportunities for students to extend learning beyond the normal course offerings and the school campus. Beginning with the class of 2009, all students of Seekonk High School are required to complete 25 hours of community service as graduation requirement. This program has encouraged students to become active members of their communities, and students have responded by becoming involved in blood and food drives, as YMCA volunteers, and much more. Some students have become so involved that the guidance department has noted cases where students gathered 100 hours of service. Last year, the school instituted a performance-based program for upperclassmen. This program encourages students who are self-motivated to find and develop a program to study throughout a semester or school year. Enrollment in the program has grown significantly in its two-year existence. Students are now participating in programs that get them into authentic learning situations including working in zoos, schools, hospitals, and more. The school provides students with the opportunity to attend Rhode Island College, Bristol Community College, and Johnson & Wales University as high school seniors while meeting the requirements for both high school and college at the same time, but as a result of social and financial pressures, the program does not have significant enrollment. SHS also provides a strong athletic program over the three sports seasons ranging from swimming to football. The co-curricular clubs and organizations advised by paid and unpaid staff members represent a wide range of student interests but are not strongly supported through the budget. A significant number of the clubs is not listed in the contract, and therefore stipends are not provided for advisors. Many students had wonderful things to say about the clubs and sports they are involved in. Thus, student activity and enthusiasm has been successfully directed by the school into rewarding, meaningful experiences beyond the school campus. (self-study, students, teachers)

Curriculum development in most subject areas is incomplete, but the school-wide expectations for student learning provide a structure which coordinates emphasis on certain academic skills within departments and shares expectations for student achievement across disciplines. Curriculum content is not coordinated in any formal way, but individual teachers sharing common planning time or taking the initiative do occasionally coordinate their efforts. For example, an art teacher recently initiated a professional development presentation and invited all who wished to attend to learn how to integrate art into their curricula. Minimal curricular coordination and articulation exists between Seekonk High School and its primary sending school. Although K-12 science and math curricula have been written in the past two years, teachers report that lack of coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the curriculum is a problem even in these areas and even in courses such as Algebra I, which is taught at each school. Department heads have invited middle school teachers to high school department meetings on occasion, but sufficient time has not been allocated to allow articulation and coordination of the K-12 curricula. Outside of math and science, Spanish teachers from each school have met to coordinate and articulate, but all parties agree that without a curriculum in place, little coordination can be accomplished. (self-study, teachers, administrators)

Most instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, staffing levels and the resources of the library/media center are sufficient to allow for the implementation of the curriculum. Staffing levels are adequate for the existing course offerings but do not allow for expansion of the programs or reestablishment of programs that have been removed by budget cuts in recent years. The library/media center is noted for the dedication of its staff, but the aging equipment managed by the library/media center is beginning to have negative impacts on teacher and student use of technology. There has been significant funding for books

and magazines in the past two years. In light of the lack of funding in the years prior to 2006, there is a need to continue funding at this level. Students are able to take advantage of the resources of the library for project and research purposes. Supplies in the school are adequate at this time but suffer under the weight of the budget as it waxes and wanes. There is a lack of textbook replacement on an ongoing cycle, resulting in many textbooks that are already becoming aged without any replacement cycle plan in place. Technology in the building covers a wide range of items, but in most instances they are dated to the time of the school renovation completed in 2002. There are some newer technologies including SMART Boards (2), LCD projects, as well as DVD/VCRS that have been provided by teachers from their private funds. The lack of new technology is preventing students from meeting the goals of the school's mission statement and expectations as life-long learners and users of technology. Though there have been new positions added to the high school in the past year, these have not made up for cuts made over the past five years during the budget crisis that included the closing of an elementary school in Seekonk. (classroom observations, student shadowing, technology and library staff)

In most subject areas, the absence of a written curriculum is an obstacle to faculty members involvement in curriculum development, evaluation, and revision. However, some members of the math (2005-2006) and science (2006-2007) departments were actively engaged in development of the curriculum through membership in the K-12 Task Forces for each department. School-wide expectations have been integrated into their curricula, and department-specific rubrics have been developed for communication in math and inquiry in science, which facilitates using assessment data to evaluate and revise the curricula. However, there has been no follow-up evaluation and revision of the curriculum based on student performance. School-wide rubrics for assessing student achievement of school-wide expectations were developed through a collaborative process as a result of professional development in 2005-2006 and have influenced instruction as each department has taken responsibility for certain academic expectations and as faculty members share ideas and review student work during common planning time. More directly, faculty members are actively engaged in the beginning stages of curriculum development (mapping) during allocated professional development and common planning time. Faculty members reviewed the results of the common sections of exams by department, but the insights gained would not be used to revise curricula that do exist. The school has made a substantial effort to actively engage the faculty in the development of the curriculum, and curriculum development is a top priority in the strategic plan with the hiring of a curriculum coordinator effective July 1, 2008.

The school has committed time, financial resources and personnel to developing, evaluating and revising curriculum, but has not yet reached sufficient levels. The commitment of time has been made in the school's rotational schedule by establishing professional development and common planning time as part of the seven-day cycle. This has provided time for teachers to begin developing curricular maps, which is the beginning of the process of developing full curriculum. Financial resources have been dedicated to the positions of department heads and a curriculum coordinator. An outside consultant was hired to develop K-12 math and science curricula. The position of Director of Curriculum and Instruction was created and filled for the first time in April, 2007, but the person left in the fall of 2007. The position has been filled yet again for the 2008-2009 school year. These positions have had limited immediate impacts but provide significant opportunities for future development. Though there has been significant dedication to professional development including three, well-used, days throughout the school year, there is limited funding to provide teachers with additional time for further development of curriculum which is resulting in a slower development process. There has been no formal process established for evaluating and revising existing curriculum. (teachers, school leadership, self-study)

Professional development activities support the development of the curriculum. Faculty members have one common planning period per every seven day cycle in which they meet with other faculty members and one professional development period per cycle. Building administrators do not have any control over professional development topics and activities. Common planning time, which is directed by building administrators, is used for such

activities as reviewing student work and assessments, developing and refining common mid-year and final exams, sharing ideas for alternative assessments and projects, and the integration of school-wide rubrics into instruction and assessment. Teachers have also used some periods to develop curriculum maps. The administration has also presented professional development workshops during faculty meeting time on topics including curriculum mapping and essential questions. A small number of staff members have attended more extensive training in curriculum mapping. Two full professional development days were added to the 2007-2008 calendar, for a total of three days. On two of the days, teachers were trained in differentiated instruction. A .2 literacy coach provides embedded professional development on using literacy strategies in the content areas. A .5 technology integration specialist works with teachers to incorporate technology into their curriculum. This training, the dedication of time during the school day to collaborate, has allowed faculty members to engage in the long-term process of developing and implementing the curriculum. (teachers, self-study)

### **Commendations**

1. The development and use of exemplary rubrics as assessment tools
2. The implementation of school-wide rubrics for each academic expectation, research papers, and inquiry project
3. The use of integration and emphasis on depth in rewritten freshman/sophomore courses in algebra and two years of biology.
4. The art department's three-week program to share art with other disciplines
5. The wide array of extra-curricular and off-site offerings for all students
6. The hiring of a district curriculum coordinator
7. The reinstatement of the department leadership positions following a ten year absence
8. The curriculum mapping process
9. The performance-based program for students in the upper grades
10. The support for the curriculum provided by the media specialist
11. The provision in the school schedule of common planning time

### **Recommendations**

1. Create a complete written curriculum for all courses at all levels in all subject departments
2. The academic expectations must be a driving force in development of curriculum and must be explicitly included in all revised and new curricula.
3. The school must develop and implement a common curriculum format that prescribes content, integrates school-wide learning expectations, identifies course specific learning goals, suggests instructional strategies, and suggests assessment techniques including school-wide rubrics
4. Include higher order thinking skills, inquiry, and problem-solving in all courses at all levels and provide opportunities for authentic application of knowledge and skills

5. As part of the curriculum process, include necessary coordination with sending schools
6. Develop a plan and process and provide sufficient time, financial resources, and personnel for curriculum based on student achievement of school-wide expectations and provide necessary professional development for all aspects of this process
7. Ensure that all common planning time is used purposefully by all participants to develop and implement curricular improvements
8. Ensure that the building administrators have some control over professional development activities

# 3

## TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

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### INSTRUCTION

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

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

### Conclusions

Seekonk High School teachers employ instructional strategies that are consistent with the school's mission and expectations for student learning. Teachers consider the mission and expectations for student learning when choosing instructional strategies. Teachers utilize a variety of instructional strategies to produce students who are active, self-directed, reflective, and scholarly learners. The creation of new courses that are challenging and offer variety for students have encouraged teachers to use strategies learned in professional development

sessions on differentiated instruction. By attending professional development workshops and utilizing common planning time, the staff has made an effort to adopt best practice and instructional strategies. The learning environment supports the mission statement and offers opportunities for all students to achieve their maximum potential by becoming responsible, productive citizens and life-long learners. (self-study, shadowing, observation, meeting with teachers)

The Seekonk High School faculty employs instructional practices that personalize instruction, engage students as self-directed learners, involve critical thinking, provide opportunities for students to demonstrate that they are able to apply what they have learned, and promote student self-assessment and self-reflection. The professional development in differentiated instruction has allowed some teachers to modify their instruction to reach all students in their classrooms. The guidance department uses TestWiz to produce MCAS results with specific data to help teachers focus on weaknesses for those students who have failed the test. Teachers are thereby able to adjust instructional strategies to address student needs. To address the needs of at-risk or behavioral students, the school has created the BEST program. To further assist all students, the school developed the TST (teacher support team) program to identify and assist students who are underperforming. These collaborations assist teachers in the development of strategies specific to student with special needs. There is a need, however, for more formalized professional development so that teachers can enhance the development and use of strategies appropriate for special needs students. Teachers express a desire to work with other subject areas to develop lessons; there are sporadic, yet high-quality connections across disciplines. Once a project proposal is approved, the student is able to participate in an individual performance-based project providing an opportunity for the student to be a self-directed, active learner. Students who have special education needs have the opportunity to participate in college-level and honors courses and many special education students use this opportunity with success. Students in AP and honors classes frequently use higher-order thinking skills to promote depth and understanding and are provided opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills; these opportunities are inconsistently offered in standard and college-level classes, however. There is self-reflection in different activities such as a portfolio project in science and a self-reflection page in a history project. To support the mission statement and the desire for the school to promote all students to achieve their best, there must be wider use of high level thinking and higher expectations for all students in all courses. (self-study, shadowing, observation, student work, teachers)

Seekonk High School teachers utilize feedback from students, parents, support staff, fellow teachers, and administrators to improve instructional practices. The implementation of the teacher support team allows regular education teachers, guidance personnel, and special education teachers to identify and implement strategies to help a variety of students. The reintroduction of the department head position is evolving into the role of the instructional leader in each specific discipline; however, time devoted to preparation for NEASC in the current school year has not allowed them to fulfill that responsibility. A few students have provided feedback for courses through anonymous evaluations. Common planning time provides an avenue for teachers to discuss best practice and instructional strategies, but time constraints and other assignments and commitments have prevented detailed discussion and improvement. Survey results state the parents feel the teachers know the students well but that parents have little impact on the instruction of their children. The improved structure of common planning time will provide a forum for faculty members to hold a dialogue on improving instructional practices. Some formal exchange should be encouraged with both students and parents to complete this picture. (observation, teachers, staff members, survey, parents, self-study)

Seekonk High School teachers are expert in their content areas, knowledgeable about current research on effective instructional practices, and reflective about their own practices. The professional development program at Seekonk High School has provided teachers with two full days of learning, specifically centered on differentiated instruction. Teachers are also given one professional development period per seven-day cycle to work on curriculum, current research, best practice, and generation of new course ideas; however, time constraints and

preparation for the NEASC visit and other assignments have absorbed this time recently. The addition of department chairs and department meetings provide a forum for teachers to share ideas they have gathered from professional workshops. Teachers have reflected on their own instruction and use student reflection on lessons in order to improve the delivery of material. Teachers complete a reflection on their own instructional strategies at the end of the school year. There is concern that the cost of professional development may inhibit teachers from obtaining the most current research in their discipline. To ensure quality education for students at Seekonk High School, adequate funds for professional development must be allocated to the budget each year. (self-study, teachers, department chairs, students)

Teachers at Seekonk High School create a professional culture through the discussion of instructional strategies. Common planning time is a formalized time for teachers to meet one period per seven-day cycle in order to discuss issues around curriculum, instruction, and classroom management. The school-wide rubrics provide a common vehicle among the different discipline areas. The establishment of a mentor program helps new teachers transition into the school culture and provides the initiate with an avenue for discussion that encourages implementation of a variety of instructional strategies. During the post-conference of the evaluation process, teachers are given feedback on their instructional practice from supervisors. This feedback provides both commendations and recommendations for the teachers on which to reflect. Because of the professional culture within each discipline, teachers can challenge students by taking risks in planning lessons, and, are therefore provided feedback by their colleagues without fear of criticism. (teachers, survey, observation)

Many teachers at Seekonk High School utilize some form of technology to support instruction and learning. Some teachers incorporate Powerpoint into their instruction through LCD projectors and televisions. Renaissance responders were used in a science class. Each teacher is provided with a laptop computer if they want it. Some teachers tried to use the classroom carts of laptop computers during class time, but much instructional time was lost to the booting up and the updating of computers in the middle of the class. Teachers are becoming more comfortable using technology in class but because the technology hardware is older and there is a limited number of SMARTBOARD and LCD projectors in the building, many teachers have difficulty utilizing technology on a daily basis. A firm financial commitment for both the purchase of technology and the training of faculty members will improve the use of technology instruction. (observation, facility walk-through, shadowing, survey, self-study, students, parents)

Seekonk High School professional development is guided by identified instructional needs and provides opportunities for teachers to develop and improve their instructional strategies. In 2007-2008, regular education teachers attended a two-day differentiated instruction workshop in the fall. Teachers then were able to strengthen their knowledge of this educational strategy and incorporate it into their classrooms. Examples of this training were demonstrated by using graffiti walls, essential questions, and exit tickets. Teachers will be surveyed this spring as to what types of professional development they would like to receive during the 2008-2009 school year during their three in-service days. The mentor program provides a source of professional development for both new and veteran teachers to exchange ideas and concerns. Teachers would benefit from a focus on professional development in the areas of meeting the needs of special education students and classroom management. The literacy coach is providing embedded professional development in the classrooms. The addition of the district curriculum coordinator should provide direction and stability to the selection and ongoing professional development of Seekonk High School teachers. (standard committee, shadowing, teachers, special education teachers, guidance counselors, observation)

The teacher supervision and evaluation processes are used to improve instruction for the purposes of enhancing student learning and meeting student needs. The evaluation tool used at Seekonk High School gives both professional and non-professional teachers opportunities to receive feedback from an evaluator based upon the contracted evaluation cycle. However, survey data shows that 26% of teachers feels that evaluations do not have a bearing on improving their instruction. The addition of the department head position increases the validity

of the observation process in that they are highly-qualified in their disciplines and can provide content-related feedback rather than just commendations and recommendations on pedagogy. Ongoing analysis of the evaluation process will strengthen the impact of feedback from both administrators and department heads. (teachers, survey, self-study, standard committee)

### **Commendations**

1. The teachers who used essential questions to guide their daily lessons
2. The addition of a transition coordinator to provide alternative instructional (school-to-career) opportunities for all students.
3. Teachers' application of what they have learned from the differentiated instruction workshops.
4. The newly-designed teacher mentor program that has been implemented to assist new teachers.
5. The provision of a laptop computer for all teachers to improve their instruction.
6. The process whereby teachers reflect and submit in writing their thoughts on their school year and instructional strategies
7. The hiring of additional classroom teachers
8. The addition of new course offerings
9. The positive learning environment that supports the mission and expectations
10. The TST/BEST programs

### **Recommendations**

1. Provide professional development to assist teachers to personalize instruction and to involve all students in higher order thinking
2. Provide ongoing professional development to assist teachers on instructing and accommodating students with special needs
3. Provide professional development opportunities for teachers to examine best practices in instructional techniques and adopt appropriate strategies for Seekonk High School.
4. Improve technology to provide teachers with up to date equipment and training, and students with learning experiences and skills more appropriate avenues of learning.
5. Utilize common planning time to share and critique instructional technique and to create more interdisciplinary lessons
6. Provide sufficient and dependable levels of funding to support professional development offerings and course reimbursements
7. Create formal methods for feedback on instruction from parents and students

## TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

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# 4

### ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

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

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

#### Conclusions

Seekonk High School has begun to assess school-wide and individual student progress in achieving the academic expectations in the mission based on school-wide rubrics. The mission statement is displayed in every classroom and is well-known to all students in the

school. Mission and expectations are printed in the student handbook. Targeted levels for meeting all academic standards are posted in every classroom, and the complete rubrics are printed in the student handbook. Seekonk High School has done a commendable job of defining and displaying the standards for academic expectations of students. Each department has assumed responsibility for incorporating one or more of the five specific academic expectations into its curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessment practices. Teachers use school-wide rubrics to varying degrees in analyzing student work. The regular use of these rubrics will determine whether or not students are achieving success in the academic expectations. (classroom observations, self-study, student work, student shadowing)

Seekonk High School's professional staff has collected data to assess the success of the school in achieving its civic and social expectations. Teachers have created a responsibility rubric that addresses some of the aspects of the civic and social expectations. The targeted levels for meeting the standard in the responsibility rubric are posted in all classrooms. Students receive a comment on their report card rating the extent to which they meet the criteria on the responsibility rubric in each class. Attendance and tardiness records, discipline referrals, extra-curricular participation, and community service statistics are collected. This data is not formally analyzed to determine which students are meeting the civic and social expectations; however commencing with the class of 2009, students are required to perform a minimum of twenty-five hours of community service. While community service hours are recorded for each student, they are not required to reflect on the service they performed and its impact on the student or community so that there is no clear connection between the community service activity and the civic and social expectations. Anecdotal data supports the school assertion that students are involved in a myriad of school activities. In order for Seekonk High School to adequately assess whether all students are achieving the civic and social expectations, the collected data must be analyzed consistently. (self-study, teachers, school support staff)

For some learning activities, Seekonk High School teachers clarify to students the relevant school-wide academic expectations and course-specific learning goals that will be assessed. During the first week of school, classroom teachers provide students with course guidelines outlining their grading policies and classroom procedures. The school's mission statement is clearly stated in most course guidelines. Students report that teachers also explain the expository writing, oral presentation, problem solving, reading, research paper, responsibility, and technology standard targeted levels that are posted in each of the rooms. Rubrics or scoring guides relating to the academic expectations are usually given to students when a project is introduced. Most often, the rubric specifies the course-specific goals, however, and less often specifies the school-wide goals. Only by some teachers are Seekonk High School students made aware of how classroom assignments and assessments relate to the school-wide academic expectations. (classroom observations, student shadowing, students)

Teachers base some classroom assessment of student learning on school-wide and course-specific rubrics. Some teachers regularly use the school-wide academic expectation rubrics for major assignments. Most teachers have created their own rubrics when the school-wide rubrics are not appropriate. For example, several social studies and English teachers have written common rubrics for writing assignments. Science teachers have written lab report rubrics and math teachers have written rubrics for problems of the month. Scoring guides are used in place of rubrics for many learning activities and some projects. Some teachers and students refer to these scoring guides which provide teachers with numerical grades on assignments as rubrics. The proper use of rubrics that describe specific learning outcomes will enable teachers to better assess and communicate to students whether or not they are meeting learning standards for assignments and students may eventually learn to use the rubrics themselves as valuable learning tools. (student work, self-study, students)

Teachers use varied assessment strategies to determine student knowledge, skills, and competencies. Examples of assessment tools include tests, quizzes, projects, homework assignments, research papers, portfolios, lab reports, presentations, performances, problems of the month, recitals and concerts, student news and video productions, artwork, family and consumer science products, and behavioral self-assessments. Some faculty members use

school-wide rubrics and course-specific rubrics to evaluate student learning. Writing across the curriculum is prevalent in many courses. Some students participate in a semester or year-long performance-based learning experience. Thus, students have varied opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. (students, teachers, self-study)

A few teachers 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. Teachers are provided with one common planning period per seven-day cycle. A protocol is in place for looking at student work, but it is not used consistently. Examination of student work has had an impact on the creation of school-wide rubrics but has not had a significant impact on curriculum revision and improvement of instructional practices at this time. The examination of MCAS and SAT data by members of the English, math, and science departments has resulted in the modification of instructional strategies and common assessments. (teacher interviews, meetings with teachers, self-study)

The school's professional development program has provided opportunities for teachers to collaborate in developing student assessment strategies. In November of 2005, teachers received a full day in-service training on how to create effective rubrics. This training began the process of writing school-wide rubrics for academic expectations. These rubrics were refined throughout the 2005-2006 school year during department and faculty meetings. Teachers are also provided one professional development period per seven day cycle. It is not clear exactly how teachers utilize these professional development periods. Some teachers feel that this time is very productive and that it has enabled them to develop assessment strategies with other teachers. Others have used this time for other professional development activities. All departments are required to have 50% common content on mid-semester and final exams. Thus, equipped with a protocol and given time to work, more consistent improvement of all aspects of teaching and assessment should result. (self-study, teachers, department leaders)

The professional staff at Seekonk High School does not fully communicate individual student progress in achieving school-wide academic expectations to students and their families. Teachers use the academic expectations rubrics on assignments to notify students of their progress in meeting these expectations within their classes. Parents report being well informed about their child's progress by the school. Teachers are proactive in communicating student progress or lack thereof through e-mail and personal phone calls. Teachers provide information to all parents through midterm progress reports. Parents receive report cards with student grades, a responsibility rubric score that addresses some of the civic and social expectations, and a general comment. However, this communication is related to the reporting of grades and not student progress in achieving school-wide academic expectations. The school does not have a process to communicate its progress in achieving all school-wide academic expectations to the school community. However, the school does report honor roll and student involvement in extracurricular activities. These are communicated to the public through weekly e-mail newsletters to parents, the weekly student produced news show, and the local newspaper. (self-study, parents, guidance counselors)

### **Commendations**

1. Students' familiarity and use of the school's mission statement
2. Comprehensive school-wide rubrics to measure student achievement on each academic expectation
3. The targeted levels for achieving the standard on each academic expectation clearly posted in all classrooms
4. The creation of the responsibility rubric to assist in student achievement of the civic and social expectations
5. Common planning time and professional development time for all teachers during the school schedule

6. The use of a variety of assessments strategies by teachers
7. The design and introduction of the community service requirement commencing with the Class of 2009
8. The collection of a variety of data to be used to measure the school's achievement of its social and civic expectations
9. The adoption of the Looking at Student Work protocol to increase the use of student work in assessing student achievement of the academic expectations

**Recommendations**

1. Use the protocol for looking at student work on a regular basis to improve curriculum and instruction
2. Develop and implement a formal plan to assess school-wide and individual student progress in achieving the academic expectations
3. Increase the number of assignments in which the school-wide rubrics are used
4. Connect more course assessments to the mission statement and the academic, social, and civic expectations
5. Create criteria to measure student progress towards achievement in meeting civic and social expectations
6. Provide professional development for defining and creating course-based rubrics
7. Develop and implement a process for the school to report progress in achieving all school-wide expectations to the school community
8. Establish a formal process to disseminate the results from the examination of data regarding all academic, social, and civic expectations

# SUPPORT STANDARDS

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LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION  
SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING  
COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

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SUPPORT STANDARD

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**5**

**LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION**

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

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

## Conclusions

The autonomy afforded the principal of Seekonk High School allows her great flexibility in the execution of her duties and responsibilities. During her short tenure, she has employed curricular changes in math and science, introduced student clubs (Peer Helping Network), facilitated the reorganization of the guidance office that includes the appointment of a director of guidance, and made attempts to expand leadership opportunities for the faculty. Since publishing the self-study, Seekonk High School has reinstated department chairs after an absence of at least 10 years and has given new direction to the BEST program. She has supported the Director of Guidance to develop a schedule that eliminates all study halls in order to provide more opportunities for teaching and learning. The principal has immersed herself in all aspects of school management and teaching and learning and has outlined a rigorous vision for Seekonk High School, embedded in the school improvement plan. As a result, Seekonk High School is positioned to map and monitor its progress in achieving the mission and expectations for student learning led by an effective leader. (school improvement plan, principal, department chairs, central office administrators)

The Seekonk High School principal's vision of what a twenty first century student needs to be able to know and do incorporates several current best practices and is an extension of the school improvement plan. Central themes of the principal's vision include: curriculum development, the improvement of SAT scores, the maturity of a functional professional learning community to be achieved beginning with common planning time, and the importance of students demonstrating respect for themselves and for others. The principal is an educational leader who has embraced the role of instructional leader by bringing in an external consultant to produce effective curriculum in math and science, establishing expectations for the development of a comprehensive guidance curriculum, and introducing new courses across the school's program of studies. The principal's comprehensive understanding of her responsibilities has driven the school's mission statement throughout the school community. The principal is transitioning the school from a top down design to one that employs a leadership team including the reintroduction of department chairs. The new model is a dramatic shift for the school which has operated for at least ten years without department chairs. The organization of Seekonk High School's leadership model and the management of this model are evolving. Strategies to develop and implement a plan to include those disciplines without a department chair into the leadership team and the decision-making progress. Although the principal has a clear vision for the direction of Seekonk High School, faculty and staff members are unable to clearly articulate this vision and how it relates to some of their current tasks. (self-study leadership committee, department chairs, central office administrators, principal e-mails, principal and department chair job descriptions)

Teachers are afforded opportunities to assume active and meaningful leadership roles at Seekonk High School. Teachers created the school's responsibility rubric. The administration developed the Saturday detention model with School Board approval in response to concern regarding the number of out-of-school suspensions. The principal actively solicits faculty input via the faculty senate, department head meetings, budget preparation, and through informal staff inquiries. Although the efforts and initiatives of the faculty are aligned to the principal's vision and the school improvement plan; there are some faculty members who believe that this vision could and should be more clearly communicated. These discrepancies between the views of some faculty and the principal's vision provide the possibility for a lack of clarity among the members of the Seekonk High School community. In order to ensure the existence of a clearly communicated vision for Seekonk High School, these discrepancies must be eliminated. (school improvement plan, teachers, department heads, principal)

The structure of Seekonk High School is organized to promote the school's mission and expectations for student learning. There is a new organizational structure evolving, due in part to two first year assistant principals, and there are many new initiatives developing at Seekonk High School. In recent months, the principal has asked a social studies teacher who formerly taught special education to take custody of the BEST program and to provide it with direction. The principal prompted the district to seek an external consultant to launch a full re-write of the math and science curriculum. Seekonk High School has used some of its scheduled common planning time to complete its self-study, prepare for the NEASC visit, work on curriculum mapping, and develop common exams. Currently the organization of the school does not consistently foster interdisciplinary instruction, integration of curriculum, or a more reflective culture. Continued and improved communication between the administration and the faculty particularly concerning the role of department chairs will increase the school's capacity to promote and achieve the school's mission. (central office administrators, principal, department chairs, teachers)

The school's grouping patterns do not foster heterogeneity. There are four levels of classes in senior year of English – advanced placement, honors, college prep, and standard and three in the other years. There are three levels in mathematics and two in the other core courses. Course selection and/or placement is predominately a result of teacher recommendations although parents have full autonomy over students' choice and thus "level" placement. Students have ample opportunity to change classes allowing movement across levels. Students with special education needs have the opportunity to participate in college level and honors

courses and many succeed in them. Seekonk High School has not fully implemented the concepts of heterogeneous grouping and true inclusion, however. Co-teaching environments are not the norm to ensure that all students have full access and opportunity to experience a challenging and rigorous curriculum. The protocol permits self-leveling to take place and limits true access to the courses that best align with the school's academic learning expectations and their supporting indicators. (teachers, guidance counselors, students, program of studies, self-study).

The seven class, five periods per day, rotating schedule with no study halls is an effective scheduling model used by Seekonk High School to support the implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. With periods ranging from sixty-five to seventy-three minutes, teachers are able to appropriately address state framework concepts. Teachers express great satisfaction in the schedule as it provides adequate time for science labs, physical education activities, art, music and other performance-based activities. It is not yet clear how effective this schedule is in supporting external internships and job-shadowing activities which are currently being explored by the transition coordinator. The annual review of the schedule design must consider the ongoing program changes to most effectively address students' educational needs. (self-study, teachers, principal, support staff members, classroom observation)

Students, parents, and other school members of the Seekonk High School community are provided some opportunities to participate in the decision-making process. Student and parent satisfaction is evident at Seekonk High School. Parents endorse the changes at the school relative to the dress code, the new courses being offered, the addition of the transition coordinator, and the commitment from guidance to meet the needs of all students in response to concerns that have been initiated by the parents. Although parents are committed members of the Seekonk High School learning community, parents have not been the motivating factor behind these improvements. Parents do volunteer their time at several school activities such as the school store, and they recently initiated a post-prom activity. Parents remain supportive of the school's direction and feel that they have several vehicles for sharing their ideas and concerns including serving as members of the school council and having adequate access to the school's administrative team. Parents are engaged in the Seekonk High School learning community and are aware of students' academic, civic, and social expectations. Students are much less confident in their role as decision-makers at Seekonk High School. In the Endicott Survey only 36% of students responding believed they have a voice in the important decisions at this school. Students in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade reported feeling the most confident in their ability to make decisions. Students participate in the school council and have the opportunity to discuss and impact topics such as the homework policy and student handbook. As members of the student council, the students actively participate to improve the spirit and culture of Seekonk High School but they do not serve as governing members in the decision-making process. Students do feel comfortable stopping administrators within the building and sharing thoughts informally. There are also several formal and informal channels which affect decision-making at Seekonk High School such as the faculty senate, the school council, and the re-introduction of department chairs. Faculty members agree that they can bring their concerns to the administrators at Seekonk High School but there is sometimes a lack of follow thru. Although several faculty concerns have not yet been addressed, other concerns have led to the implementation of programs such as the recent creation of the Saturday detention policy and the responsibility rubric. The leadership team structure at Seekonk High School is evolving. Thus in many ways, students, parents, and members of the staff are involved in the Seekonk High School learning community and participate in the direction of the school. There are numerous opportunities for improvement in the shared decision-making process at Seekonk High School. (principal, students, parents, department chairs, leadership and organization committee, self-study)

Most teachers at Seekonk High School currently report that they have student loads that allow them to meet the individual learning needs of individual students. This differs from the 36.2% of teachers who originally reported in the self-study that they did not have adequate time to address individual student needs in their classes. This is also a contrast to the 58.1% of students who reported during the self-study that teachers spend one-on-one time with them

when it is needed. Possible explanations for the discrepancy are that the students considered both class time and time spent outside of the regular school day in their decision-making and that teachers previously had higher student loads due before the addition of new faculty members. The self-study reports that teachers have an average student load of 88.5 students with an average class size of about 22 students. However, individual class sizes range from 6 students to 30 students. To most effectively meet the individual learning needs of all students, the equal distribution of students across classes may need to be more closely examined. (self-study, teachers, students, special services personnel)

Many students at Seekonk High School report that there are adults in the building (other than their guidance counselors) who personalize their learning experiences and who are able to assist them when the students seek out this guidance. However, there is no formal ongoing program in place to ensure that all students feel they have received a personalized educational experience. Without a formal program, many Seekonk High School students must take it upon themselves to look for these adults when they are seeking guidance. According to the self-study, many students feel they have adequate one-on-one time with teachers; however, only about one third of teachers feel they have adequate one-on-one time with the students. The addition of a formal ongoing program, such as an advisory, would assist students in developing productive relationships with adult members of the school community. (self-study, students, teachers, special services personnel, administrators)

Some teachers report that it is difficult for some of the professional staff to effectively and formally collaborate within and across departments at Seekonk High School on a regular basis. Common planning time as it exists at Seekonk High School allows some teachers to collaborate during the school day with colleagues both within and across departments. However, some teachers report that they often have to complete assigned tasks (NEASC preparation, curriculum mapping, and the development of common exams) during this time and they find it difficult to adequately address all of the tasks (both assigned by the administration and self-directed by the faculty). Other teachers report that they are responsible for determining how they will spend common planning time. For some, much of the responsibility lies with the teachers to collaborate with each other at informal meeting times during the school day or before or after the school day. Although it is difficult for some faculty to adequately address all of their reported needs at Seekonk High School, there has been collaboration regarding curriculum mapping, the examination of student work, and the development of common exams. There has also been significant, purposeful collaboration among the special services staff during its common planning time. (teachers, teacher interviews, minutes from common planning time)

To varying degrees the school staff at Seekonk High School is actively involved in promoting the well-being and learning of all students. The faculty and staff at Seekonk High School are very involved in a variety of extra-curricular activities including athletics, clubs, and activities. The restructuring of the support staff to include the director of guidance, transition coordinator, school psychologist, and the adjustment counselor demonstrates Seekonk High School's devotion to all students. Although the positions have not fully evolved, the administration, faculty, and parents are optimistic regarding the potential contributions that these additions will provide for the school. Since the positions are relatively new to Seekonk High School, time must pass to justify their optimism for this potential. (administrators, leadership and organization committee, department heads)

Student success is regularly acknowledged, celebrated, and displayed at Seekonk High School. Student success is recognized in a variety of ways including the student-run television station, awards nights, national honor society, foreign language honor societies, parent newsletters, pride cards, and morning announcements. Student works, awards, (academic, athletic, and extra-curricular) are displayed in numerous areas throughout the building including in showcases and classrooms. By this active effort to display examples of student success Seekonk High School creates a culture of pride not only within the students as individuals, but also within the collective student body. (students, classroom and hallway observations of posted materials, yearbook, self-study)

Students report with great conviction that Seekonk High School is an excellent place to be. A variety of course offerings, athletics, clubs and activities (SADD, GSA, PHN) and examples of teacher support, all contribute to student satisfaction. Emergency response drills, lockdowns, the presence of the school resource officer, the administration's timely responses to recent incidents, and the procedures in place regarding such things as traffic, access to the building, access to the lavatories, and the responsibility rubric contribute to the students' feelings regarding the safety of Seekonk High School. Students, faculty members, and parents concur that Seekonk High School is safe and orderly. That environment enhances student learning and there is a sense of ownership among the Seekonk learning community members. (panel presentation, students, teachers, parents, self-study)

School board decisions and policies support the implementation of the school's mission and expectations for student learning. School board meetings are well organized and sometimes operate in a workshop model, allowing for principal input. Additionally, there is alignment between the district strategic plan and the school's school improvement plan, suggesting that the school's vision is supported by the board. Members of the school board commented that the principal has great autonomy in the hiring and firing of staff members, budget submission, and curriculum design, thus they support the school's mission. There is great disparity between the board's view and the staff perceptions of school board decisions however. The Endicott self-study survey denotes that only 42.4% of the staff believes the board's decisions support the mission and expectations for student learning. Examination of the discrepancy found great staff dissatisfaction in the budget process. (self-study, school board members, principal)

### **Commendations**

1. The safe educational environment with a positive school learning climate recognized by students, parents, faculty, and staff members
2. The principal's vision that is clearly aligned with the school improvement plan and that has driven some of the significant improvements at Seekonk High School
3. The reintroduction of department chairs and the reorganization of additional leadership that has improved the organizational structure at Seekonk High School
4. The opportunity for shared common planning time among support staff members
5. The development and implementation of innovative programs such as the Peer Helping Network (PHN) and the performance-based learning projects
6. The incorporation of common planning time and professional development into the regular school day
7. The shift to shared decision-making
8. The alignment between the school's strategic plan and the high school's school improvement plan
9. The scheduling model that supports teaching and learning
10. The leadership roles undertaken by faculty members
11. The pride and respect students demonstrate for the school, the professional and support staffs, and their peers

### **Recommendations**

1. Clarify the connections between the principal's vision for the school, the school improvement plan, and the tasks assigned to the faculty
2. Continue to develop more cooperative and collaborative relationships among the leadership team to more effectively include the department chairs in the decision-making process
3. Provide leadership for those departments that do not currently have department chairs to ensure that they are equitably represented in the decision-making process
4. Develop and implement strategies to effectively include those disciplines without department chairs in the leadership team and the decision making process
5. Improve and increase the level of communication and collaboration between the faculty and administration giving particular attention to the process for expressing faculty concerns and assessment of the effectiveness of the current faculty senate model
6. Improve not only professional development opportunities for the faculty at Seekonk High School but also the follow-up activities associated with professional development
7. Provide professional development in classroom management strategies
8. Begin to implement heterogeneous grouping across student ability levels
9. Develop and implement a formal program such as an advisory that will strengthen the relationship among all students and adults in the Seekonk High School learning community

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**SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**


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

**All Student Support Services**

1. The school's student support services shall be consistent with the school's mission and expectations for student learning.
2. The school shall allocate resources, programs, and services so that all students have an equal opportunity to achieve the school's expectations for student learning.
3. Student support personnel shall enhance student learning by interacting and working cooperatively with professional and other staff and by utilizing community resources to address the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of students.
4. All student support services shall be regularly evaluated and revised to support improved student learning.
5. There shall be a system for effective and ongoing communication with students, parents/guardians, and school personnel, designed to keep them informed about the types of available student support services and identified student needs.

6. Student records, including health and immunization records, shall be maintained in a confidential and secure manner consistent with federal and state law.
7. There shall be sufficient certified/licensed personnel and support staff to provide effective counseling, health, special education, and library media services.

**Guidance Services**

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

**Health Services**

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

# 6

## SUPPORT STANDARD

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### SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

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#### Library Information Services

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

#### Special Education Services

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

#### Conclusions

Student support services at Seekonk High School are consistent with the school's mission and expectations for student learning. Guidance services, health services, library/media services, and special education services comprise a spectrum of services meeting the needs of the students of Seekonk High School. Each service played a role in the development of the mission statement, each operates under its guidance, and has a procedure in place to assess student progress as defined by the school's expectations for student learning. (library/media specialist, guidance personnel, teachers, self-study)

The school allocates available resources, programs, and services so that all students have an equal opportunity to achieve the school's expectations for student learning in most areas. The school makes every effort to engage all students in the educational program and services of Seekonk High School. The guidance staff guides students in the selection of courses with the input of teachers and parents, striving to place students in appropriate and challenging courses. The guidance director has worked to place all students in structured courses 100% of the school day. The guidance department monitors the community service program requirement and has encouraged the institution of a performance-based learning program which connects with the school's civic and social expectations. Guidance counselors implement 504 plans. With the addition of a new guidance director, one (1) new guidance counselor, an adjustment counselor, and a transition coordinator, the department has adequate resources to fulfill the school's mission. Inclusion allows all students access to the curriculum, and the special education department provides support for students with IEPs by co-teaching with regular education teachers, staffing the learning center, and coordinating the BEST (behavioral) program. The new adjustment counselor provides additional support and group counseling for the students in the BEST programs. Library/information services support the school's expectations for student learning. The library/information service staff is available to work with students and faculty before, during, and after school. The librarian efficiently makes use of the resources available within the physical confines of the library and outside online resources; however, service is limited by the aging technology. Health services, provided by a single nurse, support the school's expectations for student learning. (library/media specialist, support personnel, special education staff, teachers, self-study)

Student support personnel enhance student learning by interacting and working cooperatively with professional and other staff members and by utilizing community resources to address the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of students. Guidance personnel communicate with other members of the professional and support staff to enhance student learning. They make referrals when needed to outside agencies as do other support personnel. They assist the teacher support team (TST) with problem-solving and implementing support plans for student improvement. Special education teachers and aides provide support to content area teachers by assisting in classrooms. Guidance personnel, special education staff members, the transition coordinator, school nurse, and the adjustment counselor work together during common planning time to implement the school's expectations for student learning. The library media specialist works with the Seekonk Library and the Boston Public Library to implement the school's expectations for student learning. The nurse utilizes the resources of the Massachusetts State Department of Public Health to implement the school's expectations for student learning. Thus, co-operation and dedication of all members of the student support network and active connections to outside services provide maximum student benefits. (observation of common planning time, standard committee, support services personnel, self-study)

Student support services are regularly evaluated and revised in the special education and health services departments. There is no formal evaluation process for guidance services and library/information services. (standard committee, parents, self-study)

There are systems in place for effective and ongoing communication with students, parent/guardians, and school personnel to keep them informed about types of available student support services. The guidance department keeps parents informed through letters, e-mails and the school website. Other information from the guidance department is disseminated through a weekly parent e-mail newsletter, local newspapers, and posted on the outdoor school announcement board. A copy of the program of studies which explains graduation requirements is given annually to all students. Teachers of students with 504 plans and teachers of students with IEPs receive written plans and are invited to all meetings for their individual students. Quarterly progress reports of the IEP are mailed to the parents/guardians. The BEST program has been realigned within the past year with new classroom protocols that better ensure that at-risk students have equal opportunities for success at Seekonk High School by the setting of more realistic goals for these students. The librarian communicates with

parents through the school newsletter and the school website. The librarian also communicates with the faculty via e-mail and by making presentations at faculty meetings. (standard committee, parents, self-study)

Student records including health and immunization records are maintained in a confidential and secure manner consistent with federal and state law. They are not, however, stored in fire-proof cabinets. This aspect of student record keeping is not consistent with state law. (direct observation, standard committee, self-study)

There are sufficient licensed and certified support staff members. Support staff to student ratio is adequate in all areas with the possible exception of special education. Two certified special education teachers are responsible for 60 students in the learning center, and one certified special education teacher is responsible for approximately sixteen students in the BEST program. (special education staff, support services members, standard committee, self-study)

Three full-time guidance counselors, a half-time school adjustment counselor, a transition coordinator, and a director of guidance provide comprehensive guidance services. Counselors provide individual and group meetings, personal, career, and college counseling, student course selection assistance, collaborative outreach to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers, and appropriate support in the delivery of special education services for students. Examples of this are found in: 8<sup>th</sup> grade transition meetings, PSAT presentations, SAT presentations, ASVAB presentation, college information meetings, career information, and individual progress and personal goal meetings. Guidance counselors encourage students to pursue performance-based projects to enhance further knowledge in specific areas of interest. Students are encouraged to see their counselor whenever the need arises to address academic and emotional concerns. Students in need of additional counseling services are first referred to the school adjustment counselor or psychologist. If more intense services are required, referrals are made to local community mental health agencies such as Community Counseling of Bristol County. The guidance department also works closely with representatives of the department of social services. The school adjustment counselor provides group or individual counseling for specific emotional issues such as anger management and depression. Counselors are responsible for the individual academic programs of special education students and must attend every scheduled IEP meeting and/or review for their students. This includes meetings for IEP as well as any manifestation hearing. They also attend TST meetings for students who are encountering difficulty in meeting expectations for student learning and may need special education services. The new transition coordinator is working to support the 8<sup>th</sup> grade transition to 9<sup>th</sup> grade, to facilitate access to community resources, and to guide seniors in their transition to career, college, or the work force. There is not sufficient pre-vocational programming to serve non-college bound students, however. (support service staff, standard committee, self-study)

Health services provide preventive health services, direct intervention services, appropriate referrals, mandated services, emergency response mechanisms, and ongoing health assessments. (nurse, health education records and policy binders, self-study)

While there is no current formal information literacy curriculum in place, information literacy skills are found both within the library media program as well as embedded in some but not all content curricula. The district librarians are working towards a library/media curriculum K-12. Library/information services personnel are extremely knowledgeable about the curriculum and support its implementation. A wide range of materials, technologies, and other library/information services that are responsive to the school's population is available to the students and faculty and utilized to improve teaching and learning. \$16,000 was allotted to the library and the library media budget allocated for new books. Instructional and computer technology within the library and media services is aging and in need of upgrades. Excessive time to boot laptops and shut downs for system updates in the middle of class does not contribute to the efficient use of the computer technology. Student, faculty, and support staff members 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. The library/information services program fosters independent inquiry by enabling students and faculty members to use various school and community information resources and technologies. There is currently a ninth grade orientation program in place. In this program, students are shown how to find materials in the physical library through a scavenger hunt, how to use the online catalog, how to access and utilize the SAILS library network to request materials from other libraries, and how to access and use databases provided by the state. Currently there is no formal information literacy curriculum in place. When requested, the library staff will gather and organize encyclopedias, books from the general collection, and books from the collections of other libraries, as well as databases and Internet sites. Policies are in place for the selection and removal of information resources the use of technologies and the Internet. The Seekonk School Department has policies in place for the selection and removal of school library media materials, as well as handling requests for the reconsideration of materials. These policies are consistent with the guidelines of the American Library Association, the Library Bill of Rights, and the First Amendment rights to intellectual freedom. Eighty percent of students indicated knowing the school's policies regarding use of the Internet. (staff interviews, documentation, 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. There is a referral process in place to assist with the identification of students who may require special education services. The TST is a regular education referral process coordinated by a faculty member that includes support personnel and faculty members. The TST determines the modifications that need to be made within the classroom, and the team reviews the student progress after a period of time. If progress hasn't been made, the student may be referred for further assessment and then an appropriate success plan is determined. (special education department staff members, teachers, standard committee, self-study)

### **Commendations**

1. The reorganization of the guidance department including the hiring of a department head, an additional guidance counselor, and a part-time adjustment counselor
2. The provision of three grant-funded automated external defibrillators
3. The support team's collaborative work during common planning time
4. The guidance department for promoting the performance-based project of independent student learning
5. The initiation of a teacher support team for regular education students
6. The progress in the development of a K-12 media curriculum
7. The significant increases in the level of funding for the print collection in the media center
8. The initiation of twenty-five (25) hours of community service as a graduation requirement

### **Recommendations**

1. Formalize the comprehensive guidance curriculum to meet the needs of all grade levels
2. Initiate a system where guidance counselors can access academic progress of failing and

struggling students prior to term grade reports

3. Expand the freshman transition program to provide more opportunities for guidance and parent involvement
4. Provide increased access to guidance services
5. Institute a formal process for evaluating guidance services
6. Institute a formal process for evaluating library/information services
7. Complete and implement an information literacy plan that is integrated with the school's curriculum
8. Fund and implement a technology plan and upgrade the computer technology in the library

# 7

## SUPPORT STANDARD

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### COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

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

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

#### Conclusions

Seekonk High School engages parents and families as partners in each student's education and encourages their participation in school programs and parental support groups. Information and communication with family members of students is a priority and is accomplished in a number of ways, including the publication of a weekly principal's newsletter.

This newsletter regularly solicits parental involvement in school programs and activities. Parents and families can access information through the Seekonk High School website, which is part of the Seekonk Public School District's website. Information on this site includes news and events with links to various issues of the principal's newsletter, a calendar of events, a section listing school programs that satisfy SHS's community service guidelines, and links to complete athletic schedules. Parents receive student progress reports in every subject at the mid-point of each marking period. Report cards are mailed directly to parents at the end of each marking period. Parents are contacted by telephone for student absences. Parents of incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders are invited to a parents' night held in February of the student's 8<sup>th</sup> grade year. A freshmen orientation evening is held for parents and incoming freshmen just prior to the start of the school year. Families feel that the transition from middle school to high school is beginning to improve. Parents of students are invited to a school-wide open house in September and a formal parent-teacher conference in November. College application and financial aid nights are well attended. Parents regularly attend and support their children's extracurricular activities, including various sports, clubs, concerts, plays, and evening awards programs. Parents serve on various committees and organizations (strategic planning committee, the school improvement council, and parents' advisory committee) and actively support the school's programs, including the initiation of the school's post-prom activity and volunteering their time in the school store. (self-study, teachers, parents)

Seekonk High School offers its students a limited number of opportunities to participate in formal business and industrial partnerships. Seekonk High School students are able to attain college credit through the Rhode Island College Early Enrollment Program by taking AP English, AP Calculus, or AP Biology during their senior year. Some students enrolled in the performance-based learning courses may complete informal internship, shadowing, and mentoring work as part of their individualized program. The school also has several informal partnerships with local colleges and universities for professional development purposes and is a member of the Rhode Island Educational Collaborative. There are no formal partnerships between the school and community. This issue is being addressed at the current time. For instance, part of the Seekonk High School Improvement Plan (2007-2010) includes the goal of strengthening communication between the school and community through the formation of school/business partnerships and the recent hiring of a transition coordinator to begin to make connections between the school and the community. These connections will support student learning through internships, job shadowing, and mentoring programs. The new 25-hour community service mandate will also bring students and the community closer together. (self-study, panel presentation, teachers)

Seekonk High School is a clean and comfortable place that provides a safe environment for its students. The building is exceptionally maintained by one full-time custodian during the day and three custodians on the evening shift. Despite a major renovation in 2002, with the addition of a state-of-the-art natatorium, a larger media center, and new offices, no additional custodial help has been added. The facility does contain some fully functional areas that are not currently in use by Seekonk High School students. It houses a woodworking shop with full equipment, but the area is not currently used because of the lack of a certified industrial technology teacher. The pool is utilized by the school's swim team and by the community but is not part of the regular physical education curriculum. Programs like chorus are not currently being offered because of previous budget cuts or lack of a qualified instructor limiting student access to some areas of interest. Difficulties with air quality have caused some temperature issues in the auditorium and second floor. Variations in air quality and temperature as well as an inability of students to access all programs at Seekonk High School are matters that have the potential to interfere with the school's ability to fulfill its mission. (self-study, students, teachers)

Seekonk High School meets all applicable federal and state laws and is in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. It was renovated in 2002, and an elevator and handicapped access were added at that time. The building currently complies with the American Disabilities Act. Proper inspections are routinely completed and up to date and the building is well-maintained. (facility tour, self-study, school support staff)

Equipment at Seekonk High School is properly maintained, catalogued, and replaced as the budget permits. At the present time, there is no planned maintenance program in effect such as service contracts for band instruments, art and science equipment, and computers. Most of the computers are six or seven years old and students and staff members complain about their lack of speed and connections causing a wide-spread lack of higher-level technology instruction. Thus the delivery of curriculum is hindered by the lack of planning and inadequate technology and maintenance funding. (self-study, teachers, student interviews)

The principal determines an annual maintenance budget after consultation with the supervisor of building and grounds and the head custodian. Large expenditures may be included in the school budget or funded through warrant articles. Parents, students, and staff overwhelmingly feel that the building is very clean and very well maintained. Although a planned program of building and site management has been developed, adequate funding must be provided for Seekonk High School to meet its goals. (self-study, support staff members, survey)

Seekonk High School has done some ongoing planning to address future programs, enrollment, staffing, facility, and technology needs. A five-year district strategic plan was developed during the 06-07 school year by a group of administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community members. This plan sets forth goals in areas such as curriculum, resources, and community relations. A formal five-year technology plan was developed by the district technology committee that addressed technology needs and costs and is reviewed annually; as part of that plan, a consultant was hired to review and assess the current needs in terms of equipment, teacher training, and funding. Although these planning strategies are exemplary, implementation of the goals has been constrained by ongoing budget issues. Thus, consistent, adequate funding is needed. (self-study, parents, teachers)

The current budget is not adequate to maintain the appropriate programs, supplies, and materials at Seekonk High School; furthermore, a history of inadequate budgets has impacted personnel and class size and failed to provide for the replacement of outdated computer equipment and textbooks in some subjects. Technology updates must become a priority in order for Seekonk High School students to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and fulfill the mission. User fees for sports have been recently dropped, but fees still exist in areas such as art and family/consumer science. Elective courses are not consistently offered because of lack of funding. The ability of students to fulfill all academic expectations may be limited by a lack curricular offerings and academic opportunities.. (self-study, survey, teachers, administrators)

The budgetary process at Seekonk High School begins in the fall with an analysis of the school improvement plan, all relevant data, and past budget appropriations. The results of this review are shared with department chairs at a regular meeting and then with the entire faculty and staff. Budget requests must be aligned with the district's strategic plan, the school improvement plan, and the mission and expectations. All teachers fill out budget request forms and submit them to their department heads who, in turn, submit them to their principal; those teachers without departmental representation submit their forms directly to the principal. The principal reviews the requests and meets with department chairs and teachers as necessary to clarify goals and set priorities. Thus, the budget process serves the organizational principles of the school; yet some staff report that there is no process in place to prioritize funding for ongoing programs.(self-study, teachers, support staff members)

### **Commendations**

1. The efforts of Seekonk High School to reach out and involve parents and families as partners
2. The clean, well-maintained facility
3. The active support and involvement of parents in school programs and initiatives

4. The efforts of the transition coordinator to secure jobs for students in the community
5. The formal partnerships with local college
6. The formal adoption of a district strategic plan and a five-year technology plan

### **Recommendations**

1. Fully fund the five-year technology plan
2. School system officials and the local governing body increase efforts to gain voter support for the annual budget to ensure its support for the school's mission and expectations for learning, staffing levels, instructional materials and equipment, and the educational programs and services
3. Ensure that budgetary allocations enable the school to offer elective programs on a consistent basis
4. Study the feasibility of using the school's swimming pool for instructional purposes during the school day and report the results
5. Provide finding to reinstate the chorus and technical education programs
6. Develop more formalized school/business/community partnerships
7. Resolve air quality issues in the auditorium and the second floor

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

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

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

To ensure that it has current information about the school, the Commission has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Commission within sixty (60) days the occurrence of any substantive change which negatively impacts on 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 . 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 express its appreciation to the administration, faculty, staff, parents, and especially the students of Seekonk High School for their hospitality and candor during our visit. Their collective efforts were of immense assistance to the visiting committee.