

# **Commission on Public Secondary Schools**



## **Report of the Visiting Committee**

### **Ledyard High School**

Ledyard, Connecticut

March 30 – April 2, 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 considers this visiting committee report of Ledyard 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 Ledyard High School in terms of the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. Neither the total report nor any of its subsections is to be considered an evaluation of any individual staff member but rather a professional appraisal of the school as it appeared to the visiting team.

## INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

- Teaching and Learning Standards
- Mission and Expectations for Student Learning
- Curriculum
- Instruction
- Assessment of Student Learning
- Support of Teaching and Learning Standards
- Leadership and Organization
- School Resources for Learning
- Community Resources for Learning

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

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

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At Ledyard High School, a committee of 10 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 staff members, parents, and students.

The self-study of Ledyard High School extended over a period of 24 school months from April of 2005 to fall of 2007. The visiting committee was pleased to note that representatives of students, parents, citizens, and school board members joined the process and the staff in 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, Ledyard 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 the entire professional staff had approved it.

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

A visiting committee of 15 evaluators was assigned by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate the Ledyard High School. The Committee members spent four days in Ledyard, Connecticut, reviewed the self-study documents which had been prepared for their examination, met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students, and parents, shadowed students, visited classes, and interviewed teachers to determine the degree to which the school meets the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. Since the evaluators represented public schools, the state department of education, central office administrators, a board of education, vocational institutions, and institutions of higher education, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Ledyard High School.

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 35 hours shadowing 7 students for a half day
- 24 hours shadowing 8 students for a half day
- a total of 30 hours of classroom observation (in addition to time shadowing students)
- numerous informal observations in and around the school
- individual meetings with 30 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and the assessment of student learning
- group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers
- the examination of student work including a selection of work collected by the school

Each conclusion on the report was agreed to by team consensus. Sources of evidence for each conclusion drawn by the visiting committee appear in parenthesis in the Standards sections of the report.

The seven Standards for Accreditation reports include commendations and recommendations that in the team's judgment will be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning and to better meet Commission Standards.

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

### **Quality of the Self Study**

The self-study prepared for the visiting committee was thorough and frank. Additionally, the supporting documents in the evidence boxes provided both the rationale for the judgments in the self-study and the factual background supporting those judgments to assist the visiting committee in understanding those rationales. More importantly, this thoroughness allowed the visiting committee members to spend the major portion of their time and effort on the essentials of a successful visit: interviews, meetings, classroom visits, random observations, and conversations with school personnel. The self-study responded to all of the prompting questions in the self-study guide and provided a forthright appraisal of the school's adherence to the standards for accreditation. Additionally, during the course of the visit, the school responded promptly to requests for further supporting information and documents.

### **Discussion of Significant Findings**

Ledyard High School (LHS) is a positive learning environment characterized by a school climate that is safe, positive, respectful, and supportive, resulting in a sense of pride and ownership by students, staff, members, and parents who believe the school to be a safe, secure, positive, and respectful environment. The parent/student handbook which states the discipline and attendance policy supports the mission in an effort to create an environment that promotes meaningful learning. Students and teachers have noticed a marked decrease in violence and vandalism since the hiring of the new principal.

Students, parents, and, faculty and staff members alike speak enthusiastically about the school and take pride in their accomplishments. They demonstrate their school pride by attending school-sponsored activities, wearing their jackets, participating in LHS Spirit Week activities, and selling out music and drama performances. Students in the agri-science program extend their classroom learning to the local community through plant and flower sales, grooming animals, landscaping, and building sheds. Reports from parents, teachers, and students establish that the principal's effect on school climate has been positive. He instills confidence and empowers teachers as leaders in their classrooms. Both students and parents recognize the principal's student-centered approach as a positive change.

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

The Ledyard High School Mission and Expectations for Student Learning were developed by a representative committee of the school community. The process to revise Ledyard's mission statement began prior to 1998 when the school development team (SDT) surveyed students, parents, and teachers to address the question, "What makes a good school?" This survey resulted in 200 separate items that were pared down to 12. The current version, revised in 2007 by the NEASC Mission and Expectations Standard Committee consists of 9 items. These 9 items remain in the current mission statement and the

academic, civic, and social expectations for student learning. However, the civic and social expectations for student learning have yet to be completed pending the establishment of school-wide rubrics to assess each expectation. Currently, Ledyard High School has placed strong emphasis on raising awareness of the mission statement and the expectations for student learning. These efforts are supported by a large poster in each classroom and a plaque displayed prominently in the main office. The LHS Mission Statement represents the school community's fundamental values and beliefs about student learning. Overall, the mission statement and academic expectations demonstrate the school community's desire to emphasize higher order thinking skills in the areas of reading, writing, communication, problem-solving and research, yet of those aspirations fall short of proving that the mission statement is an integral part of the decision-making associated with the school's operation.

Many departments have made extraordinary efforts to update curriculum guides and to show connections between course content and expectations in the school's mission. There are, however, many courses for which curriculum documents have not been updated and aligned with the academic expectations. Further effort needs to be undertaken to clearly articulate the relationship between academic expectations and course curriculum in all departments at LHS.

To varying degrees, Instructional strategies at LHS include practices that personalize instruction, make connections across disciplines, engage students as active, self-directed learners, involve students in higher order thinking, provide opportunities for students to apply knowledge, and promote student self-assessment and self-reflection. There is personalized instruction in the majority of the classes. The 4 by 4 block provides teachers the time during class to offer individual feedback and accommodate individual learning needs.

There is a teacher evaluation and professional growth plan (TEPGP) that describes the teacher supervision and evaluation process. While the process has existed on paper for quite some time, until recently, it was not the driving force for improving instruction. The recent application of the current supervision and evaluation system does support the improvement of instruction and enhancement of student learning.

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

The principal is a visible force in the building, modeling and living the mission of engaging all students in meaningful learning. Decisions made by the principal promote a climate that fosters safety and wellness. Along with the principal, the building level administrators share a desire to foster a culture that is driven by the school's mission statement and expectations as they focus the school community on student learning. The principal began his tenure as the leader of LHS in the fall of this school year; he has begun to empower other building level administrators and program coordinators to lead important instructional initiatives. The principal's willingness to build consensus while empowering others to lead, is a welcome leadership strategy that will foster the mission of engaging all students in meaningful learning and all teachers in participatory decision-making.

Teachers as well as administrators other than the principal take an active role in leadership at Ledyard High School. The two assistant principals are responsible for discipline of the students they have been assigned according to grade, attending all manifestation PPTs and preparing graduation. Each assistant principal serves as a liaison to four departments by overseeing the curriculum and evaluation process and attending department meetings. One assistant principal is the coordinator for Title IX, CAPT, and school activities and events while the other assistant principal is responsible for assigning teacher duties, attendance, and spirit week. The special education department is supervised by the coordinator of

student services whose responsibilities include in-school and out of district PPTs. The leadership team, consisting of nine department heads, all of whom are certified, meet weekly with the principal, assistant principals, and coordinator of student services to discuss new initiatives and student learning. In addition to the leadership team, department heads observe teachers within their respective departments and offer guidance and support in the improvement of instruction and assessment. Other examples of leadership roles include, but are not limited to, representation on the instructional council, school development team, dress code committee, teacher evaluation and professional growth plan, coaching, and advising opportunities.

Ledyard High School fosters business/community/higher education partnerships which support student learning. Local business and industry leaders play an integral role in planning and implementing school-to-career programs. Speakers from a variety of local businesses including Foxwoods Resort and Casino, Riley Photographic, Mystic Seaport, Northeast Utilities, and the United States Navy regularly speak with students about career opportunities. Students are provided the opportunity to job shadow at local professional centers such as Backus Hospital and the Pfizer Company. Relationships with Three Rivers Community College, Connecticut College, the University of Connecticut, and Eastern Connecticut State University prepare students for college level studies while taking classes at Ledyard High School. The Ledyard Vocational Agriculture Program offers a supervised agricultural experience (SAE) which pairs students with community volunteers who offer students an agriculture-based career experience at local working farms.

There is no effective method for accessing, recording, or reporting student progress in achieving the school-wide academic expectations. Discussions regarding possible methods to do so are ongoing but sporadic. There is non consistent requirement to use the school-wide rubrics to measure the school-wide academic expectations. While teachers have infused parts of the school-wide rubrics into specific common department-level rubrics and teacher-developed rubrics, they do not use the school-wide rubrics in their entirety for the purpose they were intended. Failure to use school-wide rubrics prevents consistent measurement of successful achievement by all students of the Ledyard Mission and Academic Expectations. (self-study, teachers, school leaders, student work)

The school site and plant does not adequately support all aspects of the education program and support services for student learning. There are significant parts of the school site and plant which detract from student learning. Those sections constructed in 2003 to house the vocational agriculture science program are up-to-date and strongly support the programming afforded to the 233 students enrolled in the Ledyard High School Vo-agi program. The school has also recently updated the school library, cafeteria, and parking lots. There are, however, large areas of the original building was constructed in 1963 that detract from student learning. These older facilities have begun to deteriorate. The leaks in the roof and deteriorating condition caused by years of wear and tear are impacting student learning. Student learning is hindered without a clean, safe, up-to-date, and technologically enriched learning environment.

## School and Community Profile

Ledyard High School, located in Ledyard, Connecticut, is situated on top of a hill next to a working farm and near the geographical center of Ledyard. Within one mile of the school are emergency services, the post office, the town hall, a supermarket, the town library and the center for the Board of Education and the Parks and Recreation Department. The school primarily serves the Town of Ledyard, but also receives students from thirteen surrounding towns due to the agri-science program.

Located equidistant from New York and Boston, and close to I-95 and I-395, Ledyard and the surrounding town were once traditional seacoast and/or rural farming communities. However, the development of both the industrial and residential bases has changed the character of this once quiet region. The recent and frequent expansions of two casinos – Foxwoods Resort and Casino on the Mashantucket Pequot tribal reservation in Ledyard and Mohegan Sun Casino on the Mohegan reservation in neighboring Uncasville – have catapulted the gambling and tourism industry to the forefront in terms of employment opportunities in the area. The expansion of Pfizer into New London has also likely drawn more young professionals to the area. Although the size of the submarine base and the workforce at Electric Boat, both located in Groton, have decreased in recent years, their proximity continues to have an important influence on the profile of the region, as many families have a member working at Electric Boat or on the Base.

Ledyard, incorporated in 1836, has an area of 38.1 square miles and contains two distinct geographical sections, Ledyard and Gales Ferry. Gales Ferry represents the western side of town and is bound by the eastern shore of the Thames River and the route 12 corridor. It features a small shopping strip, a historic village, and one of the entrances to the submarine base. Another major area business, Dow Chemical plant, is also located in Gales Ferry.

Ledyard, on the eastern side, is the town center and has a district designed for commercial development that has only recently begun to be utilized. A third business area of Ledyard is the northeastern corner, where the Mashantucket Pequot Casino and Museum are located. Ledyard is considered a “bedroom community.” Many families, while they work in other towns, choose to live in Ledyard for this reason. There is limited mass transportation available, through the SEAT bus program, which provides service connecting Ledyard residents with other local communities.

According to the Mayor’s Office, the most recent population count of Ledyard (including Gales Ferry) was 15,776, distributed among 5,619 households with median income of \$69,500. Forty-four percent of the town’s business is in services industries, followed by construction and mining at 15%, and trades at 13.8%. All other business sectors represent less than ten percent each of the work force. While many parts of Ledyard appear rural, in fact only 6.7% of the economy is agricultural in nature. The top five employers are Foxwoods Resort and Casino, Dow Chemical, A/Z Corporation, Holdridge Garden Center, and the Town of Ledyard. The current unemployment in Ledyard is 4%.

The Ledyard School District spends below the average per pupil expenditure for school districts in the state. Ledyard’s per pupil expenditure in 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 was approximately \$9,650, as compared to the state averages of \$10,994 for the 2004-2005 school year and \$11,893 for the 2005-2006 school year. Over the last two years the percentage of school funds obtained from federal and state resources have decreased from 41.8% in 2004-2005 to 39% in 2005-2006, and the percent of funds received through local resources (property taxes) has increased from 53.3% in 2004-2005 to 57% in 2005-2006. Other revenue is generated by tuition enrollment in the agri-science program. In 2005-2006, 162 non-resident students from thirteen sending districts participated in the program and paid tuition fees of

\$7,069 each. Numbers were similar for the 2004-2005 school year. Additionally, in 2005-2006, 30 non-resident regular education students, who were not involved in the agricultural program, attended Ledyard High School. Tuition rates for these students varied by grade, but averaged about \$8,950 per student. In 2004-2005, there were 40 such students with tuitions that averaged about \$8,600 each.

Ledyard High School includes students in grades 9-12 with the total 2005-2006 enrollment of 1083 divided between 517 males and 566 females. Despite the yearly potential for military families moving and a variance in the amount of students who enroll in the agri-science program, the population has remained fairly stable in recent years. Approximately 83% of the students are White, with 4.6% African American, 3.7% American Indian students, 3.0% Asian American students, and 5.6% Hispanic students. There has been a 0.8% increase in minority students since 1999.

English is the primary language spoken by 96.32% of the students. There are nine other primary languages spoken by 40 students (3.68%) at Ledyard High School. They include Spanish (1.5%), Chinese (0.18%), Albanian, Tagalong, Lao, Vietnamese, Hindi, Russian, and American Sign Language (all less than 0.5%).

The average dropout rate for the class of 2005 was 4.3% compared to the state average of 7.4%. The average daily student attendance during the 2005-2006 school year was 95%, and it was 96.5% for the 2004-2005 school year. The 20-05-2006 average absence rate, which includes personal and sick days, among teachers was 6.4 days, compared to an average of 8.3 days statewide.

Currently there are 78.7 teachers at Ledyard High School, creating a student to teacher ratio of 14:1. No staff members are teaching outside of their area of certification, and 31 are teaching with a provisional certificate, although this group includes many teachers who are eligible for a professional certificate. 84.7% of the teachers have earned a master's degree or higher. Individual teachers carry an average load of 65.8 students per semester with an average class size of 17.8, although these numbers vary significantly by department.

The school operates on a four-by-four, modified block schedule. The schedule consists of four, non-rotating classes of 82 minutes per day. Within the schedule there are three types of classes. Some courses meet every day for one semester (one credit); others meet every other day for one semester (half credit); still others meet every other day all year (half credit per semester; one credit for the year). Each faculty member is provided the equivalent of one planning period per day, although this period is not necessarily common by department or course.

Each year, one full and six half days are provided for faculty professional development for a total of eighteen hours. Additionally, there is both a faculty and a department meeting scheduled each month. Teachers work 187 days, and students attend Ledyard High School 183 days per year for a total of 981 instructional hours. These figures are above the State of Connecticut minimum of 180 days and 900 hours of instructional time per year.

All current students need 26 credits for graduation. Course requirements include four credits in English, three credits in mathematics, three credits in science, one additional credit in mathematics or science, three credits in social studies, one credit in physical education, two credits in vocational or fine arts, and one half-credit of health. The remaining 8.5 credits may be earned from a variety of elective courses, including three world languages. Until the most recent school year, one-half credit of multiculturalism and one-half credit of technology were also required for all freshmen and new students. However, cuts to staff due to budget constraints have eliminated these courses.

Beginning with the class of 2006, all students must meet the graduation requirement of proficiency on appropriate sections of the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT). Students who do not meet proficiency are provided additional opportunities to graduate by maintaining a reading/writing and/or a problem-solving portfolio which is assessed by a committee of faculty members to ensure that the student has met the reading/writing and/or problem solving standards as defined by the State of Connecticut. Students also have the opportunity to retake sections of the CAPT in the spring of their junior year to meet the graduation requirement.

Courses at Ledyard High School are divided into four levels: advanced placement, advanced, fast, and average. In 2006-2007 six advanced placement courses were available, and three additional courses have been approved by the Board of Education for implementation in 2007-2008. A system of grade weighting is used to recognize the differences in course rigor and to compute class rank. While students are encouraged to take upper level courses, they are allowed latitude in course selection and can opt for different levels in different subjects within their schedule. Currently, there are one hundred and thirty five students (12.5%) receiving special education services. In addition, there is one English Language Learners (ELL) class, which is comprised of 1% of the student population.

There are a variety of educational programs that are also available to students. Examples of such programs include collegiate institutions that allow high school students to take courses at the college level, both within the high school setting (University of Connecticut Early College Experience, Tech Prep Program) and on campus (Connecticut College New London Scholar program, Three Rivers Community College Partnership), institutions that provide adult learning and continuing education (Norwich Adult Education program, Norwich High School), and electronic learning and distance learning. In the 2004-2005 school years, there were four students who took courses on a college campus. In the 2006-2007 school year, there are 92 students enrolled in the in-house college cooperative courses and four students taking college courses on-line. Additionally, a guided virtual learning program was recently approved. This program teaches subjects required for graduation, is fully aligned with both school and state standards, and is patterned after programs currently being used in almost all 50 states. The purpose of this program is to service students who may not otherwise succeed in a traditional school environment.

Ledyard High School offers a variety of co-curricular activities for its students. These include 20 athletic programs in which 691 students participated during the 2005-2006 school year. There are equivalent programs for males and females in most sports. There are also 37 extracurricular clubs in which 613 students were involved (for a complete list of extracurricular activities, please see appendix of school and community profile).

In 2005-2006, 99.96% of the senior class graduated. In 2004-2005, 96.9% of the senior class graduated. In the class of 2006, 54% of graduates attended four-year colleges, with 29% enrolling in two-year colleges, 6% receiving other training, 9% entering the workforce, and nearly 3% entering the military. Statistics for the classes of 2004 and 2005 are similar. Ledyard graduates are accepted to and attend a wide variety of post secondary schools both locally (University of Connecticut at Avery Point, Connecticut College, Three Rivers Community College, Eastern Connecticut State University, and Mitchell College) and throughout the country (Penn State, RPI, Harvard, Maryland, Berkley College of Music).

Ledyard High School has launched many initiatives in the last ten years to improve student learning. The current modified four-by-four block schedule was introduced in 1999-2000, replacing seven rotating, fifty-four minute classes per day with four, non-rotating, eighty-four minute periods. The goal of the block schedule was to improve student learning by increasing student/teacher contact time, providing students the opportunity to take more courses per year, focusing student work on four instead of

six subjects per day, eliminating study halls, allowing for work study, internships and community service projects, creating a less disruptive day with fewer student transitions, and providing teachers with the opportunity to incorporate a wide variety of strategies and activities. The results of this initiative have been mixed, and the current schedule is being evaluated, with the distinct possibility of a change in schedule for the 2008-2009 academic year. Four areas of concern with the current schedule, as identified by the scheduling committee, are loss of course content, lack of electives, lack of student retention due to continuity lapses, and the continued existence of students in study hall.

Morning Meeting, initiated in 2002, links a group of 10-15 students with one teacher for their four years of high school, and eight minutes are built into the school day for this meeting. The purpose of Morning Meeting is to improve student/staff relationships, improve communication detect and intervene in student problems, provide students with personal adult contact on a daily basis, and help students achieve the school's social and civic expectations for student learning. Each day during Morning Meeting, teachers and their assigned students go through morning exercises, hear announcements pertinent to their specific grade level, and converse either with or without an agenda. A recent development, begun in spring 2007, has been the addition of one extended morning meeting per month. This meeting, which lasts thirty-eight minutes, allows students and their teacher the opportunity to discuss various topics which may require longer periods of time, such as bullying, respecting differences, or developing organizational strategies.

Many additional programs have been developed in the past few years, aligned with school and district goals, to address targeted areas of student performance as identified by our school planning process. Since 2005-2006, the school has been developing and using data, derived from formative assessment, to improve instruction and to address specific student areas of weakness. Other important programs that have been initiated include the Virtual Learning Program (2006-2007) designed as an alternate educational program for struggling students; Extended English (2006-2007) for freshmen and sophomores who have been identified as low performers in reading, writing and math; English and Math Performance Graduation Requirement (PGR) which is a series of half credit tutorials designed to give students who have not met proficiency an additional opportunity to meet the graduation requirement; and Integrated Mathematics, which replaces average level classes in algebra and geometry as a means of raising the standards for those students and as a more comprehensive preparation for the CAPT. The first two courses in this three-year sequence were offered beginning with the current year and the third is scheduled to be introduced in the 2007-2008 school year.

Beginning with the 2006-2007 school year, the Technology Education Department, funded by a \$75,000 Carl Perkins grant, implemented a pre-engineering curriculum called Project Lead the Way (PLTW). Students who are enrolled in a college-preparatory mathematics class are eligible to enroll. The program is a five-course sequence, and those who complete all five courses will be fully prepared for a two or four-year college program in engineering. In the 2006-2007 school year, two courses were offered and a third will be added for the 2007-2008 year. The graphics room has been remodeled to accommodate both graphic arts and PLTW and two teachers have begun the necessary training. Total enrollment in the inaugural year of the program was 55 students.

Ledyard High School has also developed a number of partnerships and programs with local businesses, as well as other schools in the district, to enhance student learning and to help students explore possible career opportunities. The Career Center, which opened in 2002, works in conjunction with the School Counseling and Guidance Department to provide students with planning and preparation opportunities. Students may participate in a variety of work-based activities such as workplace tours, job shadowing, and internships, both with local businesses and at the district schools. Additionally, the agriculture department's Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) program provides students an

opportunity to gain work and learning experiences in a wide variety of settings both in and out of school. The Career Center also provides assistance with preliminary post-secondary education searches and job search skills. Additionally, the center has developed a career pathways program, which helps students align their career goals with suggested sequences of courses during their four years at Ledyard High School.

Two further examples of school/community programs include Career Day and the LHS for inspiration and Recognition in Science and Technology (FIRST) Robotics Team. Career Day was introduced to the school community in the fall of 2005. Presentations provide insight and knowledge to empower students to make informed decisions about their futures. For the Fall 2006 Career Day, 76 professionals from the community volunteered their time for this program. During the school-wide event, students, who completed surveys during Morning Meeting to determine their interests, are assigned to visit, in twenty-five minute sessions, with the three professionals whose careers most closely related to their occupational interests. In 90 minutes, approximately 3,240 work-based learning opportunities occurred for the school's 1,083 students.

Dominion Powers sponsors the Ledyard High School FIRST Robotics team with additional support provided by the Connecticut National Guard Aviation Classification Repair Activity Depot (AVCRAD) unit. This unique partnership is designed for students interested in Science and Technology. The sponsorship supports the program both financially and by establishing a team of professionals who work with Ledyard students in developing a robot to compete at the FIRST Regional and National competitions.

Student progress at Ledyard High School is measured in a variety of ways including student proficiency on our five academic expectations, as well as CAPT, SAT and AP scores. Seventy-three percent of Ledyard High School seniors in the Class of 2006 took the SAT. The average SAT score for the Class of 2005 was 511 for the mathematics section and 432 for the verbal section. Also in 2006, 7.4% of 12th grade students and 15.1% of 11th grade students took at least one advanced placement test, with 85.1% earning a score of three or more, which compares with the state average of 71.7%. On the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) 89.9% in mathematics, 93.9% in science, 85.2% in reading and 87.3% in writing achieved the state proficiency level. In 2006 the Math and English Performance Graduation Requirement (PGR) courses helped close to 100% (90% in English and 100% in math) of our students reach proficiency in two of our academic expectations. Beginning in the Spring of 2007, the school will begin exploring ways to communicate individual progress on achievement of all five academic expectations to students and parents.

Students are recognized for their academic achievement through a variety of means including Honor Roll, National Honor Society, Ledyard Scholars, Academic Awards Night and Highest Honors for graduation. In addition, many LHS students are honored for their participation in the athletic and music programs. They consistently earn all-region, all-conference, and all-state honors in both athletics and music, and the music department is a 2006 Grammy Signature School finalist, identifying the program as one of the top 100 high school music programs in the country.

# **LEDYARD HIGH SCHOOL**

24 Gallup Hill Rd  
Ledyard, CT 06339

## **Mission Statement and Expectations**

Ledyard High School provides a comprehensive program of studies and activities and a safe and supportive environment that will encourage students to reach their intellectual, social, physical, and creative potential. It is the mission of LHS, in collaboration with parents and the community, to help students become responsible, educated, and productive citizens who can thrive in an ever-changing world.

### **Expectations**

#### **Academic Expectations**

Students will:

1. Demonstrate conceptual understanding and provide support in solving a problem.
2. Demonstrate understanding by developing a position.
3. Collect and analyze evidence in support of a position.
4. Effectively communicate using a variety of methods.
5. Employ the conventions of language in communication.
6. Evaluate and improve their work.
7. Employ computer-related technology to evaluate and present ideas.

#### **Social and Civic Expectations**

Students will:

1. Provide service to the greater community.
2. Develop and maintain behavior that promotes a healthy and responsible lifestyle.
3. Exhibit respect for themselves and others.
4. Understand and demonstrate the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
5. Explore career options.

COMMISSION ON  
PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

**TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS**

**MISSION AND EXPECTATIONS  
FOR STUDENT LEARNING**

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**CURRICULUM**

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**INSTRUCTION**

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**ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING**

# Teaching and Learning Standard

## 1. Mission and Expectations for Student Learning

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

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

## Mission and Expectations for Student Learning

### Conclusions

The mission statement and academic expectations for student learning were developed by the school community and approved and supported by the professional staff, the school board, and the school-wide governing organization. The civic and social expectations have not yet been approved by the board of education but we are being refined. A representative committee composed of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and members of the Ledyard Board of Education developed the Ledyard High School Mission Statement and Expectations for Student Learning. The process to revise Ledyard's mission statement began prior to 1998 when the school development team (SDT) surveyed students, parents, and teachers to address the question, "What makes a good school?" This survey resulted in 200 separate items pared down to 150 and eventually to 12. The current version, revised in 2007 by the NEASC Mission and Expectation Standards Committee consists of 9 items. The mission and expectations committee sent out e-mails to the staff for feedback to assure acceptance. However, the civic and social expectations for student learning have yet to be completed pending the establishment of school-wide rubrics to assess each expectation. During the 2007 – 2008 school year the BOE moved to accept the mission statement and the academic expectations for student learning, but, the civic and social expectations for student learning have yet to be approved by the BOE. Currently, Ledyard High School has placed strong emphasis on raising awareness of the mission statement and expectations for student learning. These efforts are supported by a large poster in each classroom and a plaque displayed prominently in the main entrance. There were frequent discussions between students and the principal, communication with parents through the school's newsletter and web page, and also by classroom communication between students and teachers. Furthermore, the mission statement and expectations can be found in the parent/student handbook. Despite the newness of the mission document, administrators, faculty, staff, and students know about it. However, there is not yet a high level of ownership to suggest that it can become a significant force in the future of the school. (standard committee, panel presentation, self study, parents, BOE, leadership team, school documents)

The Ledyard High School Mission Statement represents some of the school community's fundamental values and beliefs about student learning. Ninety-two percent of the faculty and seventy-seven percent of the parents surveyed believe that the school's mission statement embodies their core values and beliefs about student learning. Over ninety-eight percent of the teachers surveyed believes they provide opportunities for their students to practice the academic expectations for student learning. However, the block schedule does not encourage the engagement of all students in meaningful learning, especially students at the average level, and only fifty-eight percent of the students surveyed report that they are asked to apply what they learn in class to a real-life situation outside of the classroom. The Virtual Learning Program's attendance policy revised in 2007, does not align with either the current mission statement or the previous statement of purpose. Overall, the mission statement and academic expectations demonstrate the school community's desire to emphasize higher order thinking skills in the areas of reading, writing, communicating, problem-solving and research, yet the teaching and learning in the school fall short of exemplifying the principles of mission statement. (Endicott survey, teachers, parents, classroom observations, school documents)

Ledyard High School has not yet completed school-wide academic, civic, and social expectations that are measurable and reflect the school's mission. Ledyard High School's academic expectations for student learning have been defined but are not fully reflected in the day-to-day school activity. As a result of the self-study process, the civic and social expectations have been drafted and are awaiting school

board approval. The academic expectations clarify what all students should know and be able to do, but the lack of verified civic and social expectations makes it difficult to measure what students will accomplish in the civic and social realm. Ledyard High School students must be given the necessary goals and guidance to realize necessary social skills and civic responsibilities. (Teachers, school handbook, publications, facility tour, classroom observations, student work, support staff)

For each academic expectation in the mission, the school has a targeted level of successful achievement identified in a school-wide rubric, but rubrics are not being utilized. A rubric has been created for each academic expectation, but these rubrics do not represent the actual grading practices observed and described by teachers for the expectation identified for their subject area. While the rubric outlines assessments for the individual expectations, none of the subject area teachers have used the rubrics in their entirety for individual assessments. Instead, departments and even individual teachers have adapted the school-wide rubrics for use in their specific courses. The lack of use of school-wide rubrics to target all students successful levels of achievement hinders the school from successfully assessing student achievement of the expectations to produce data that can be used for curriculum revision and improvement of instruction. (student work, meeting with teachers, teacher interviews, self-study)

The school has indicators by which it assesses the school's progress in achieving school-wide civic and social expectations. Currently, the civic and social expectations have been approved by the faculty and staff but not by the BOE. The seven civic and social expectations were written in 2005, but the four expectations in the current version do not appear on the classroom posters. They are included on both the plaque in the main entrance and in the student/parent handbook. Since the school is not formally collecting data on the civic and social expectations, there is no way to assess school-wide progress as well as the effectiveness of programs designed to support these expectations. (school board, school handbooks, facility tour)

The mission statement and the school's expectations for student learning do not guide the procedures, policies and the decisions of the school and therefore are not completely evident in the culture of the school. Ledyard High School is attempting to live its newly formed mission statement. However, excitement over the positive changes and the new leadership is threatened with concern over a lack of autonomy experienced by previous leaders in the building. As well, teachers are very concerned about how block scheduling is falling short of its original intention to reduce the number of study halls when in reality study halls have increased in number every year since the inception of block scheduling. Further evidence of inconsistency in procedures, policies and decision-making instituted at the building and district level can be noticed in the decrease in elective course offerings. For example, the 9<sup>th</sup> grade social studies course was dropped from the curriculum as well as a class in multiculturalism that was instituted after the 1998 NEASC visit. Changes in BOE membership, professional development which is viewed as more administrative than instructional, increased class sizes that impact safety, especially in antiquated science labs, woodworking and metal shops show the disconnect between the mission statement and the school's reality. While the Ledyard High School faculty and administration is attempting to live its newly formed mission statement, these obstacles indicate the decisions made on some policies and procedures are inhibiting the fulfillment of the mission statement. (meeting with teachers, teacher interviews, Principal, facility tour, BOE members, support staff members)

Ledyard High School has continued to revise elements of its mission statement and expectations for student learning. A variety of data was used to ensure that the mission and expectations reflect student needs, community expectations, and the district mission although state and national standards were not referenced. The mission statement and expectations were reviewed in 1998, 2002, 2005 and again in 2007. While the school used data to review its mission such as the SDT survey, there is no regular plan to continue this revision even though the current civic and social expectations have not been finalized.

Furthermore, the only community survey of opinion was in the pre-1998 SDT survey and the 2006 Endicott survey. There is no data collection process that includes student information data such as CAPT scores, common formative assessments, including use of the rubrics, and attendance and office referrals to evaluate the effectiveness of the use of the current mission. Thus, the mission and expectations are not being used and reviewed as the driving force behind decisions made to insure that all students are engaged in meaningful learning at Ledyard High School. (Endicott Survey, administrators, teachers)

### **Commendations**

1. Visibility of the school's mission and academic expectations
2. General familiarity with the mission and expectations

### **Recommendations**

1. Design and implement a method to measure civic and social expectations
2. Ensure that the school board votes to accept the civic and social expectations
3. Redesign and implement school-wide rubrics for academic expectations for all students in all classes
4. Ensure the mission and expectations guide the procedures, policies, and decisions of the school and are evident in the culture of the school
5. Create a formal plan to ensure that the mission and expectations are regularly reviewed using a variety of data to ensure that they reflect student needs, community expectations, the district mission and state and national standards

# Teaching and Learning Standards

## 2. Curriculum

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

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

# Curriculum

## Conclusions

Content area departments have identified those academic expectations for student learning for which they have assumed responsibility; however, these academic expectations have not been documented in all curriculum guides. Ledyard High School has recently rewritten its mission statement to include academic, civic and social expectations for its students. The math, English, social studies, and science department curriculum guides have been revised recently and include references to the academic expectations. Other departments have been encouraged to align existing curriculum and assessments with the mission statement and academic expectations. These departments have been directed to document academic expectations in existing curriculum guides before the end of the 2007-08 school year. Ledyard High School faculty members have expressed concern about being rushed to complete this process in such a short time. Teachers report that the current curriculum director is scheduled to retire at the end of the school year, and the position is not definitely funded for next year. While each department has begun the process of identifying the academic expectations for student learning covered in their content areas, a substantial amount of work needs to be accomplished before the expectations for student learning are strongly supported in the curriculum of Ledyard High School. (teachers, administrators, self-study)

Largely because the school's academic expectations are new, the school has not aligned all curriculum with expectations and has not provided students sufficient opportunities to practice and achieve each of those expectations. Many departments have made extraordinary efforts to update curriculum guides and show connections to course content and expectations in the school's mission. English curriculum guides suggest leading questions that promote effective critical reading and writing; science curriculum guides suggest lab activities which encourage students to research and problem-solve; and social studies curriculum guides encourage students to employ effective research and study skills. These activities outlined in the curriculum guides provide students opportunities to practice the academic expectations. There is, however, a majority of courses for which curriculum documents have not been updated and aligned with the academic expectations. Support systems designed to help students succeed are not driven by a coherent attempt to measure and evaluate student performance through the lens of the academic expectations. The relationship between academic expectations and course curriculum in the majority of departments at Ledyard High School remains unclear. (teacher panel, teacher interview, curriculum guides)

The school curriculum does not consistently prescribe content, integrate school-wide learning expectations, include course-specific learning goals, suggest instructional strategies, and suggest assessment techniques aligned to school-wide rubrics. Recently revised curriculum guides in math, English, science, and social studies have been updated and prescribe content, integrate relevant school-wide learning expectations, reference specific learning goals, suggest instructional strategies, and suggest assessment techniques that include the use of department-based and teacher-created rubrics. An analysis of these curriculum guides reveals curriculum documentation that prescribes content and includes course-specific goals. Although departmental goals have been established for most courses, there are many courses that lack learning goals. The curriculum documents have not been aligned with school-wide expectations for student learning and do not effectively and consistently suggest the use of school-wide rubrics. Until the faculty reaches agreement on the content of the school-wide rubrics and understands how to implement these rubrics, the written curriculum will fail to help teachers assess student work through the lens of the expectations for student learning as articulated in the mission statement. Time, formal administrative coordination, and funding need to be committed to ensure that all curriculum guides

prescribe content, integrate relevant school-wide learning expectations, include specific learning goals, suggest instructional strategies, and suggest assessment techniques including the use of school-wide rubrics. (self-study, teacher panel, curriculum documents, administrative panel)

Some curriculum guides engage students in inquiry, problem-solving, higher order thinking, and provide opportunities for the authentic application of knowledge and skills. A review of student work and observations in classes reflect that inquiry and problem-solving articulated in the curriculum is taking place in many courses. Projects such as the organization of a horse show; construction of on-campus buildings by agri-science students; the manufacture and marketing of Adirondack chairs by woodworking students; the coordination and planning of a field day by the National Honor Society; the LHS Credit Internship Program; and independent study courses at Ledyard High School all provide students with the opportunity for authentic application of knowledge and skills. Ninety-four percent of the faculty believes that students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills in their classes. There are, however, some courses and content areas which have not fully documented activities and learning outcomes that promote inquiry, problem-solving and higher order thinking. Based on the content contained in curriculum documents, it is not clear that all students are given opportunities to participate in higher order thinking, authentic application of skills, and problem solving in all courses at Ledyard High School. A formal initiative to update curriculum documentation in all courses needs to be undertaken in order to ensure that all students, at all levels, and in all courses are exposed to content that promotes higher order thinking, problem-solving, inquiry, and authentic application of knowledge and skills. (self-study, teacher panel, curriculum documents, administrative panel, teacher interview)

While there are various examples of integrated learning in a few subject areas, the curriculum is not appropriately integrated and does not emphasize depth of understanding except in some areas of school initiative such as the outstanding agri-science offerings. Interdisciplinary opportunities depend upon the initiative of individual teachers rather than a cohesive school-wide curriculum plan. Some of the obstacles to implementing interdisciplinary units and lessons result from the lack of a formal curriculum implementation, revision, and evaluation cycle which provides the time, focus, and funding for teachers to develop interdisciplinary curriculum. In some instances, teachers emphasize the depth of understanding over breadth of coverage. Higher order thinking was observed in some English, reading, tech ed, and music classes, but this is the result of teacher initiative rather than the result of a formally articulated curriculum. The absence of fully coordinated and interdisciplinary curriculum does not enable students to make cross-curricular connections and inadequately supports higher order thinking. (self-study, classroom observations, students, teachers, administrators)

There are many opportunities for students to extend learning beyond their normal course offerings and the school campus. For example, students may participate in the UCONN Early College Experience, the New London Scholar Program, Three Rivers Community College Tech Prep Programming, Lyme Academy summer program, and they may take courses at Connecticut College as well as other area community colleges. Co-curricular activities include the First Robotics Team, Agri-Science State Career Development Events, and the math team competition. A number of field trips to support curriculum take place during the school year. These include trips to the Museum of Natural History, Hartford Stage, Mystic Gallery, and Project Oceanology. Students may participate in school-to-work opportunities including school-based internships at the high, middle, and elementary schools as well as work-based learning. Ledyard High School provides many varied opportunities for students to extend learning beyond normal course offerings and the school campus. (self-study, parents, students, curriculum, program of studies)

There is little effective curricular coordination and articulation between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district to ensure the expectations for

student learning are being addressed. Curricular coordination and articulation K-12 is not complete. The district has started a process that addresses coordination and articulation of curriculum K-12. School leaders in some departments have begun meeting to review curriculum and ensure that it aligns with school expectations and is supported by the curriculum in sending schools. The world language and math departments meet with the sending middle school to plan for student transitions to high school. Curriculum has not been coordinated across disciplines at Ledyard High School. A full-time curriculum coordinator was hired at the start of 2007-08 school year to oversee the integration and alignment of curriculum within the high school and between the high school and middle school. Concerns have been raised that this position may be cut at the end of the school year, inhibiting the effective evolution of the curriculum coordination and alignment process. Formal coordination and articulation of curriculum will help ensure that expectations for student learning are being addressed. (self-study, parents, students, curriculum, program of studies)

Instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, staffing levels, and the resources of the library media center are insufficient and do not allow for effective implementation of the curriculum. Twenty-five percent of faculty members believe they do not have sufficient access to technological resources. Twenty five percent of the faculty also believes that they are not provided with adequate material resources. Where curriculum has been recently revised, teachers report improvement with respect to the materials necessary to teach their courses. Other areas report that they do not have textbooks or they are using out-of-date editions. Teachers have access to computer labs and laptop computer carts, but this resource is not always up-to-date and adequate to support instructional objectives. Classrooms in the older facility do not have adequate infrastructure to support a technology-rich environment. The library media center was recently updated and has technology resources. It was observed to be active throughout the school day, and the technology resources are regularly used by students and classes. Despite this activity, only 58% of students and 55% of faculty members believe that the library resources are sufficient. Class sizes were observed to be reasonable whereas some departments report inequity within courses. Insufficient materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities and the resources of the library media center inhibit the effective implementation of the curriculum. (self-study, parents, students, curriculum, observation, program of studies)

Some faculty members have only recently been involved in the formal development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum based on assessment of student performance in achieving course-specific and department-specific learning goals. The involvement in this process has not been extended to all departments. Many departments have taken the first steps in the process of designing, implementing, and evaluating common assessments in connection with the academic expectations in the mission statement. However, the majority of departments has yet to use data to guide curriculum revision and evaluation. A formalized, ongoing, curricular review, development, evaluation, and revision cycle has recently been implemented. This curriculum development cycle proposes that all curriculum guides will be reviewed every five years in the math, English, science, and social studies departments. This curriculum review cycle has not incorporated curriculum review and revision in the elective and non-core area subjects. Moreover, the use of data in the newly implemented curriculum review and revision cycle primarily extends to the use of CAPT scores. In response to CAPT data, the science department has implemented environmental science as a required freshmen course; the math department has revised geometry and replaced its math classes with integrated math; and the social studies department is reinstating a required 9<sup>th</sup> grade course. Data on student achievement of the school's academic expectations is not being effectively gathered and used to inform curriculum evaluation and revision. The use of data from student achievement of the school's learning expectations, and the active training and involvement of all teachers in the newly implemented curriculum development cycle will enable the school to ensure that students are equitably instructed and able to achieve learning goals in all courses. (self-study, parents, students, curriculum, program of studies)

The school has not committed sufficient time, financial resources, and personnel to the development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum. Only 21 percent of teachers indicated in the survey that the school provides sufficient time for the development, evaluation and revision of curriculum. Interviews with administrators and faculty members indicate that they agree that the addition of a curriculum coordinator at the start of the 2007-08 academic year in addition to the beginning stages of a recent formally articulated curriculum development plan have pointed the school in the right direction. The school and district must commit sufficient time, financial resources, and personnel to ensure the ongoing development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum. (self-study, teachers, administrators)

Professional development activities have not supported the development and implementation of the curriculum. Teachers have been encouraged to collaborate and revise curriculum documents, but neither scheduled time nor formal professional development opportunities to support these endeavors has been provided. The school must provide opportunities, time, and support for effective development and implementation of the curriculum. (self-study, parents, students, curriculum, program of studies)

### **Commendations**

1. The varied opportunities for students to extend learning beyond normal course offerings and the school campus
2. The outstanding agri-science and the new pre-engineering program for providing authentic learning experiences
3. The steps taken by the curriculum leader to begin the a curricular revision process
4. The revisions to the curriculum in the English, science, math, and social studies departments

### **Recommendations**

1. Ensure that all students have sufficient opportunity to practice and achieve the school wide expectations
2. Clearly articulate the relationship between expectations and course curriculum in all curriculum guides
3. Establish a protocol for the collection and analysis of student data to ensure the documentation of successful achievement of academic expectations and to inform curriculum and instructional improvement
4. Ensure that all written curricula integrates relevant school-wide learning expectations, identifies course-specific learning goals, suggests instructional strategies, and suggests assessment techniques
5. Increase time, coordination, and funding to the formal curriculum evaluation, revision and implementation cycle

6. Ensure that curriculum documents in all content areas provide students opportunities for higher order thinking, problem-solving, inquiry, and authentic application of knowledge and skills
7. Develop and articulate a plan for integration and alignment of curriculum within the school and with sending schools
8. Ensure an adequate revenue source for instructional materials, equipment, supplies, facilities, staffing levels, and resources to support the curriculum
9. Provide faculty members with time and professional development opportunities necessary to promote effective curriculum evaluation, revision, and implementation
10. Involve all faculty members in the development and implementation of effective curriculum

## Teaching and Learning Standards

### 3. Instruction

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

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

## Instruction

### Conclusions

Some instructional strategies and practices at LHS are aligned with the school's mission statement and expectations for student learning. Many teachers are able to articulate how their lessons and learning tasks address specific academic expectations. Over 90 percent of the faculty agree that the school's mission statement embodies their core values and beliefs about student learning. Instructional strategies used in the classroom engage many students, provide them with the skills necessary to reach their potential, and prepare them for learning experiences beyond the classroom. However, the extent to which instructional practices reflect the beliefs, values, and expectations for student learning addressed in the mission and expectations is inconsistent. Thus, not all students are engaged in meaningful learning. (classroom observations, student work, teachers, survey information)

Instructional strategies at LHS include, to varying degrees, practices that personalize instruction, make connections across disciplines, engage students as active, self-directed learners, involve students in higher order thinking, provide opportunities for students to apply knowledge, and promote student self-assessment and self-reflection. Personalized instruction is taking place in the majority of classes. Teachers are accessible to students before, during, and after school for instructional support. The 4 by 4 block schedule provides teachers the time during class to offer individual feedback and to accommodate individual learning needs. Seventy percent of students agree that teachers spend one-on-one time with them. Connections across disciplines, self-directed learning, and opportunities for application can be found in most classes. Examples of connections across disciplines include the extensive use of math skills in agri-science classes and in economics (the stock market game), persuasive writing skills in social studies, and the study of history, geography, and culture in world languages. Students are engaged as self-directed learners in a variety of learning activities such as individual research papers, skills practice, independent studies, and group assignments. Many assignments allow student choice to direct the focus of their learning. Teachers act as coaches and mentors, offering feedback to enhance student learning. Student application of learning occurs in most disciplines. Examples include projects in agri-science, woodworking, metals, the arts, as well as applications in math classes, world language, and science labs. Students self-assess and self-reflect on their learning. The arts, agri-science, and English provide guidelines and rubrics for students to self-assess projects and assignments. Instruction that activates higher order thinking skills, encourages deep understanding, and focuses on key concepts takes place in most of the classes at the advanced and fast level. However, fewer of the fast and average classes provide students with challenging and rigorous assignments that require them to analyze and synthesize information. In LHS classes where there is personalization, self-directed learning, active learning, application of knowledge, connections to other disciplines, and critical thinking, students are appropriately challenged and engaged in meaningful learning. (classroom observation, self-study, student shadowing, student work, teacher interviews, meetings with teachers)

Teachers informally use feedback from a variety of sources including other teachers, students, supervisors, and parents as a means of improving instruction. Opportunities to receive feedback from other teachers, students, and parents for the improvement of instruction occur, not by design, but rather on an informal basis for the most part. There is no formal plan or process for collaboration amongst teachers for the sharing of instructional practices and strategies. Many teachers solicit feedback from students through self-generated surveys, but parents are not asked to provide feedback to teachers although they are provided e-mail addresses and teacher voice mailboxes. There is a formal teacher evaluation process for administrative feedback, but this feedback is inconsistent and rarely results in improved instruction.

At LHS, the absence of formal, consistent, and ongoing feedback hinders the improvement of instruction. (classroom observations, self-study, student shadowing, student work, teachers)

Teachers are expert in their content area; many are knowledgeable about current research on effective instructional approaches and are reflective about their own practice. Eighty-four percent of LHS teachers have master's degrees or higher. Only two teachers are currently teaching outside of their certification. Teachers must become current in their subject area and aware of best instructional practice through professional development opportunities beyond those required by the district. The teacher evaluation plan encourages teachers to be self-reflective during their Professional Growth Phase. At the end of the school year, teachers complete a written reflection on their progress on the goals in their Professional Growth Plan. However, because the LHS Teacher Evaluation and Professional Growth Plan is inconsistently administered, it is not an effective tool for self-reflection on instruction. Students at LHS receive instruction from highly qualified and knowledgeable teachers. However, with a professional development program that emphasizes improvement in instructional practices, further growth would occur and results in improved student performance. (self-study, teacher meetings, teacher interviews)

Informal discussion of instructional strategies is a significant part of the professional culture of the school. Most teachers find time during prep periods, before and after school, and during lunch to discuss instructional strategies with their colleagues. Currently, teachers are encouraged to observe one another's classes to share best practices. However, obstacles to this initiative include increased workload, reluctance to miss a class for a block period, the loss of prep time, and absence of common prep time. There is no formal plan in place for the sharing of instructional practices. Although most teachers are strongly committed to instructional improvement, the lack of provisions for a formal collaboration process with articulated objectives hinders the improvement of instruction. (teachers, teacher interview, district administrators, self-study)

Technology is integrated into and supportive of some teaching and learning. Sixty percent of students and 70 percent of teachers report frequent use of technology. Math classes use graphing calculators and an LCD projector as part of instruction, and world language and English classes use instructional software. All departments have access to mobile and stationary computer labs. Students are required to use technology for research, word processing, power point presentations, and the production of the yearbook and the school magazines. While teachers do have access to laptop computer carts, this technology is not dependable. Classrooms in the older part of the building do not have the infrastructure to support a technology-rich environment. As a result, teachers report difficulty integrating technology into their daily instructional practices. LHS teachers use technology effectively when it is available to them. (teachers, classroom observations, facility tour, student work, survey, self-study)

The school's professional development program is not guided by identified instructional needs and does not provide adequate opportunities for teachers to develop or improve their instructional strategies. Eighteen hours of professional development are built into the school calendar, and the majority of teachers pursue additional professional development. Recent district-initiated professional development included formative assessment study, the collaborative practices involved in development of the self-study, and curriculum development. Professional development related to instructional strategies has not been an ongoing practice. Other than formative assessment, the most recent instruction-related professional development was offered in 1999-2000 in response to the adoption of block scheduling. Central office and school administrators determine the professional development needs of the school without involvement from teachers. Sixty-five percent of teachers report that the professional development program is not based on identified instructional needs. Professional development that improves instruction is primarily teacher-initiated above and beyond what is provided by the district's

program. Ongoing professional development dedicated to improvement of instruction must be provided to enhance the quality of instruction at LHS. (teacher interviews, teacher meetings, self-study, survey)

Teacher supervision and evaluation processes are rarely used to improve instruction for the purposes of enhancing student learning and meeting student needs. There is a teacher evaluation and professional growth plan (TEPGP) that describes the teacher supervision and evaluation process. While the process exists on paper, it is not a driving force for improving instruction. Teacher evaluations and observations do not take place according to the prescribed TEPGP schedule. In December 2006, a faculty survey reported that over half of the faculty agreed that the TEPGP did not address their instructional needs. In addition, two thirds of the faculty surveyed agreed that TEPGP was not effective for improving instruction. The application of the current supervision and evaluation instrument does not support the improvement of instruction and enhancement of student learning. (self-study, teachers, survey information)

### **Commendations**

1. Teachers discuss and apply current and varied instructional strategies
2. Many teachers provide personalization and opportunities for students to apply knowledge and skills
3. The expertise of teachers in their content areas
4. The availability of faculty to assist students with extra help

### **Recommendations**

1. Develop and institute a plan and process that provides time and resources for collaboration among teachers for the improvement of instructional strategies and practices
2. Provide teachers with the resources and training essential for the implementation of technology-rich instruction
3. Provide ongoing professional development that supports improved instruction and meets the instructional needs identified by teachers
4. Adhere to the evaluative processes as stated in the TEPGP and further evaluate the plan to ensure that it improves instruction for the purpose of enhancing student learning and meeting student needs
5. Ensure that all students in all classes are provided the best instructional strategies and practices which personalize learning, make connections across disciplines, and engage students as active and self-directed learners
6. Examine the principles and core values in the mission statement and ensure that instructional practices in all classrooms are aligned with these values
7. Provide regular, meaningful opportunities for feedback from peers, parents, and students

## Teaching and Learning Standard

### 4. Assessment for Student Learning

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

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

## Assessment of Student Learning

### Conclusions

There is no effective method for accessing, recording, or reporting student progress in achieving the school-wide academic expectations. Discussions regarding possible methods to do so are ongoing but sporadic. There is no consistent requirement to use the school-wide rubrics to measure the school-wide academic expectations. While teachers have infused parts of the school-wide rubrics into specific common department-level rubrics and teacher-developed rubrics, they do not use the school-wide rubrics in their entirety for the purpose they were intended. There is no process for documenting student achievement of the academic expectations, and, therefore, the school cannot effectively use assessment to inform curriculum and instruction. The school's failure to use the school-wide rubrics prevents consistent measurement of successful achievement of the academic expectations by all Ledyard students. (self-study, teachers, school leaders, student work)

The administration and faculty cannot yet analyze data to determine student success in meeting the school's stated civic and social expectations. However, the school has only recently revised civic and social expectations and has not effectively communicated them to students and the community nor has the school board voted to accept them. Indicators used to measure these civic and social expectations are in the nascent stages of development. However, students at Ledyard High School are very active in curricular and extra-curricular programs that have ties to these expectations. The school also has identified, and in some cases, collected data on indicators for civic and social expectations including class attendance, successful completion of government and economics courses, participation in extracurricular activities and athletics, and office referrals, but the data is not used to measure student progress in achieving the civic and social expectations. Thus, students have no clear indication of what they must do or the level of achievement they must attain to meet the civic and social expectations. (self-study, teachers, panel presentation)

Students are informed of and can identify the academic learning expectations. At the beginning of each semester, teachers identify which expectations are relevant to their courses. This information is also contained in the program of studies. However, it is not a regular practice among teachers to clarify for students which of the school-wide expectations are relevant to each learning activity. Teachers believe continual repetition is unnecessary because the expectations are self-evident. Teachers usually provide students with course-specific rubrics when assigning tasks. These rubrics vary in their specificity and level of alignment with the school-wide rubrics and therefore the school-wide expectations. In addition, some teachers provide models of exemplary work. Thus, students have some awareness of the level of achievement they must attain for each specific school-wide academic expectation. (student work, students, teachers, self-study)

Ledyard High School teachers frequently utilize course-specific rubrics to assess student learning, but they do not employ the five school-wide academic rubrics. Teachers report that they do not use the five school-wide rubrics in their entirety. Some samples of course-specific rubrics show that teachers incorporate some aspects of the school-wide rubrics into their own rubrics. As a result, course-specific rubrics are loosely connected to the school-wide rubrics. Most of the course-specific rubrics include clearly stated performance criteria for student learning. Additionally, several departments have created common rubrics such as the social studies persuasive essay rubric and the science lab report rubric. However, while some rubrics are very comprehensive and clear, others are checklists or grading scales that do not clearly convey performance expectations to students. In some cases, rubrics are not clearly explained to students, nor are they always disseminated to students prior to in the assignment. Thus,

students are occasionally unaware of how classroom assessments relate to the course-specific learning goals. Because faculty members do not use the school-wide rubrics in their entirety, students are not fully aware of how they can meet or exceed school-wide academic expectations. (student work, teacher interviews/meetings with teachers, school leadership team)

Teachers use varied assessment strategies to determine student knowledge, skills, and competencies, but determination of student growth over time is not clearly recorded. Examples of varied assessments include tests, quizzes, PowerPoint presentations, lab reports, research projects, performance assessments, and authentic assessments, particularly in the practical arts. Additionally, some departments couple assessment with internships and external projects. The use of varied assessment is largely the norm in all curriculum areas. Student work samples reflect teachers' use of a wide range of assessment strategies. While there is no consistent use of systems to track student growth over time, there is some use of portfolios of student work, particularly in the performance graduation requirement (PGR) courses. Thus, all students have varied opportunities to demonstrate their skills, but student growth is not always assessed over time. (student work, classroom observations, teachers)

Some teachers use department meetings, professional development time, and individual, informal teacher discussions to share student work and assessment results to revise their use of curriculum and their instructional strategies, but collaboration is not a consistent or sustained practice. Teachers cite a lack of common planning time among and between departments as a detriment to discussing student work in a formal manner. The faculty has not developed nor adopted a formal protocol for collegial examination or discussion of student work. Thus, lack of time and format for examination of student work reduces the potential for effective curriculum revision and improvement of instruction. The majority of faculty members modify instructional practices in response to classroom assessment results. Modifications are clearly noticeable in the performing arts. Interviews with content area teachers also yielded several pertinent examples of modifications. Some faculty members and administrators have cited using the results of larger assessments to revise curriculum formally. For example, administrators and departments analyzed CAPT scores and decided to reintroduce a ninth grade social studies course. Administrators secured release time for English teachers to assess and analyze a ninth grade practice CAPT examination to drive curriculum and instructional decisions. However, generally, inconsistent collaboration between and among departments about student work and assessments hinders meaningful curriculum revision and discussion of best instructional practices. (teachers, classroom observations, self-study)

The school's professional development program does not provide sufficient opportunities for teachers to collaborate in developing a range of assessment strategies. Teachers stated that they are given little time during mandated professional development to collaborate on the development of assessment strategies. Often teachers take the initiative to collaborate on assessment within their departments, and the district has encouraged and granted individual teacher requests to participate in professional development opportunities outside the school's professional development plan. In the past professional development has been directed largely by district-wide initiatives such as formative assessment, the work of the self-study, and curriculum development so that competing professional development priorities in the district have usurped time for collaboration. Furthermore, many teachers have found the training on formative assessment was not useful in developing a range of assessment strategies. As a result, the school's professional development plan does not provide most teachers sustained opportunities for professional development in student assessment strategies which inform their assessment practices. (teachers, department leaders, Endicott Report, self-study)

A process for reporting student achievement of school-wide academic expectations to students, their families and the community is not in place. Because there is no method for assessing achievement

of the school-wide expectations, achievement cannot be recorded or reported. Therefore, no formal method ensures that members of the school community or the public have clear information about the school's or student progress in meeting the school-wide expectations in the mission statement. (parents, IT Department, self-study)

### **Commendations**

1. The use of a variety of assessment strategies
2. Teacher's efforts to make students aware of the academic learning expectations
3. The outstanding agi-science courses with practical assessment strategies

### **Recommendations**

1. Redesign and use the school-wide rubrics consistently in all courses
2. Develop and implement a method for measuring student progress in achieving school-wide academic expectations
3. Develop and implement a method for measuring achievement of civic and social expectations
4. Implement ongoing professional development aligning assessment using rubrics with school-wide academic and civic and social expectations
5. Develop and use a common protocol for the examination of student work
6. Implement a process for reporting school and student achievement of school-wide academic expectations to students, families, and the educational community



**COMMISSION ON  
PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

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**SUPPORT STANDARDS**

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**LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION**

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**SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**

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**COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**

## Support Standards

### 5. Leadership and Organization

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

1. The 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.

## Leadership and Organization

### Conclusions

The school board and superintendent ensure that the principal has some autonomy and decision-making authority to lead the school in achieving the mission and expectations for student learning. As a result of annual budgetary constraints, the principal's ability to support desired mission and expectations achievements in learning is limited. Autonomy, however, is provided to the principal in the areas of hiring of staff and preparation of the budget. The principal has had some recent discussions with the board of education and superintendent that have left the staff feeling "optimistic, yet cautious." The principal recognizes that there has been a large number of top-down initiatives whose purpose and value have not been communicated sufficiently clearly to the staff, (such as, use of formative assessment and walk-through's), supervisory visits, and he has been able to re-build elements of faculty morale and foster communication with all stakeholders. While there are signs of increasing autonomy, the principal will not be able to lead the school to meet the mission until he has full autonomy. (administrators, teachers, self study)

The principal of Ledyard High School provides leadership in the school community by creating and maintaining a shared vision, direction, and focus for student learning. The presence of the mission statement plaque in the main entrance of the school provides a clear vision and focus for the entire school community. Parents, teachers, and students praise the principal's leadership style and positive and visible presence throughout the school and his "refreshing attitude." His approachable, affirmative presence and evident pride in the school have contributed to improved faculty morale. The principal serves as an instructional leader and focuses the school community on student learning by visiting classes and engaging individual students in discussions related directly to the school's mission statement and expectations. In addition, he fosters a culture that recognizes each student's learning style. A clear vision will continue the focus on student learning and continue to improve school climate. (teachers, student, administrators)

Department heads, all of which are 092 certified, meet weekly with the principal, assistant principals, and coordinator of student services to discuss new initiatives and student learning. In addition to the leadership team, department heads observe teachers within their respective departments and offer guidance and support in the improvement of instruction and assessment. Other examples of leadership roles include, but are not limited to, representation on the Instructional Council, School Development Team, Dress Code Committee, Teacher Evaluation and Professional Growth Plan, coaching and advising opportunities. Almost 82% of teachers felt that they assume a variety of leadership roles. Continued opportunities for leadership roles will have a positive effect on the smooth operation of the school. (teachers, self-study, Endicott Study, administrators)

Teachers as well as administrators other than the principal take an active role in leadership at Ledyard High School. The two assistant principals are responsible for the discipline of the students they have been assigned according to grade, attending all manifestation PPTs, and preparing for graduation. Each assistant principal serves as a liaison to four departments by overseeing curriculum and the evaluation process and attending department meetings. One assistant principal is the coordinator for Title IX, CAPT, and school activities and events while the other assistant principal is responsible for assigning teacher duties, attendance and spirit week. The special education department is supervised by the coordinator of student services whose responsibilities include in-school and out of district PPTs. The leadership team, consisting of nine department heads, all of whom are 092 certified, meet weekly with the principal, assistant principals, and coordinator of student services to discuss new initiatives and student

learning. In addition to observation by the leadership team members, department heads observe teachers within their respective departments and offer guidance and support in the improvement of instruction and assessment. Other examples of leadership roles include, but are not limited to, representation on the instructional council, school development team, dress code committee, teacher evaluation and professional growth plan committee, coaching and advising opportunities. Almost 82 percent of teachers believe that they assume a variety of leadership roles. Continued opportunities for leadership roles will have a positive effect on the smooth operation of the school. (teachers, self-study, Endicott study, administrators)

The organization of the school and its educational programs does not entirely promote the school's mission and expectations for student learning. Ledyard High School is composed of nine instructional departments: agri-science and technology, arts and leisure (consisting of music and physical education), English, mathematics, practical arts (consisting of business, visual arts, family and consumer sciences, health, and technology education), science, social studies, special education, and world languages and cultures. Faculty members express concern over the merging of smaller departments under a single department head. They believe that because the grouping is with unrelated departments there is a lack of understanding of issues and, therefore, effective support cannot be given. The school has made an effort to establish more personalized learning communities, and although the extended morning meetings have been discontinued, the eight-minute morning meetings continue on a daily basis in an effort to promote staff-student connections. In addition, alternative programming has been developed for students who can better be served in a less traditional education setting. These programs include the virtual learning and credit recovery program. Activity period is offered at Ledyard High School twice a month for twenty five minutes. Students sign out of their morning meeting room to go get extra help from teachers or to participate in meetings such as: Amnesty International, FBLA, Fencing, FFA, Gay-Straight Alliance, Gospel Club (music), Guitar Hero, gymnasium, Hackey Sac, international club, Junior Class, LHS Drama, LHS Math, robotics team, senior advisory, sophomore advisory, student congress (council), YES Club, or Youth Alive Bible Club. Ledyard also offers a unique school-within-a school structure -- the agriculture-science program. This program prepares students for lifelong learning by offering practical education ranging from horticulture to animal science. In the 2006-2007 academic year, the technology teachers implemented a pre-engineering curriculum called Project Lead the Way. Students in this program experience a hands-on, five course sequence designed to prepare them for a college engineering program. The school also offers a Career Center, which supports the needs and requirements of all students as they prepare for a world beyond high school. (self-study, teachers, classroom observation, students)

Student grouping patterns do not reflect the diversity of the student body, foster heterogeneity, nor do they align with the school's mission and expectations for student learning or with current educational research. The population contains 17 percent minority students of whom 5.5 percent are enrolled in AP courses while 24 percent are in collaborative classes. Collaborative classes are taught by one regular education teacher and one special education teacher and are designed to raise the level of achievement through peer interaction and modified instruction to meet each student's special needs. Most core courses in English, mathematics, science, social studies, and world languages and cultures are homogeneously grouped in three differently weighted academic levels, while most elective courses are heterogeneously grouped. Although grouping is done by school personnel considering teacher recommendations, past academic performance, and performance on standardized tests, the same students travel together through the same courses, including electives. The principal is concerned about students being recommended based solely upon performance and not on ability. Without special consideration to those students in the average level, students will continue to be "tracked" a concept which is not consistent with the school's mission. (program of studies, self-study, administrators)

The Ledyard High School modified 4 x 4 block schedule is unable to fully support the mission and expectations for student learning. The schedule provides opportunities for in-depth discussion and analysis, cooperative learning, presentations, higher-order thinking skills, reenactments, teacher feedback, authentic learning, traditional, alternative and self-assessments. However, block scheduling could support interdisciplinary classes and a variety of elective courses, and the schedule does not reflect this. In order to benefit fully from the 4 x 4 block schedule, adequate funding for staffing and curricular opportunities must be provided. (teacher meeting, classroom observation, teacher interview)

Few meaningful roles in the decision-making process have been accorded to students, parents, and other members of the school staff to promote an atmosphere of participation, responsibility, and ownership. When the Endicott Survey was administered in November of 2006, only 12.6 percent of the staff agreed with that decision-making promotes an atmosphere of participation and broad ownership. In addition, less than half of both students and parents surveyed believed they have a say in important decisions. Since the hiring of the current principal in 2007, there has been a culture shift in the building and more teachers are assuming greater roles in the decision-making process. Teacher initiatives such as the dress code committee include all stakeholders. The support staff believes their opinions are valued as if they were “part of the team.” Shared leadership will promote an atmosphere of participation, responsibility and ownership. (Endicott study, teacher meeting, secretaries meeting)

There is a discrepancy in student load for teachers, which may hinder their ability to meet the needs of individual students. Teachers report extreme variations between student loads for core academic classes (math, English, science and social studies) and electives, causing the need for an A/B block schedule for some courses. Although some teachers have student loads of 60 students, others can have student loads upwards of 120 students. Course enrollment is capped at a certain number to ensure appropriate student-teacher ratio in a class, but overall teachers say that no steps are taken to ensure equitable student loads. Elimination of positions and the practice of not replacing retired teachers have contributed to an increased student-teacher ratio and decreased offering of electives for students, and has caused an increase in study hall enrollment. The superintendent and board of education reviewed the present 4 x 4 block and determined that there was not sufficient justification for replacing the current schedule. In addition, discussions indicate a concern with instruction, not the block schedule. Continued attempts at student load equity need to be in place – even if the solution is additional staff. (self study, teachers, administrators, Endicott Report)

Ledyard H.S. has no formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult member of the school community in addition to the school guidance counselor who personalizes, knows the students well and assists the student in achieving the school-wide expectations for student learning. Although students attend morning meetings on a daily basis with grade level peers, this is not a formal program aimed at personalization. During this time, the Pledge of Allegiance is recited, announcements are read, and grade level information is distributed. Teachers take the initiative to make connections with the students in their morning meeting, but consistency is not present among teachers. The original intent of this meeting, to personalize each student’s educational experience with a formal advisory-type program, has been lost since the extended morning meeting was removed. When the extended morning meeting was in place, teachers felt there was no professional development, curricular guidance and time given to prepare adequate activities. Continued support of a personalized educational experience with explanation of purpose and training would enhance connections and building blocks already established. (students, teachers, student handbook)

Some professional staff collaboration takes place within and across departments in support of learning for all students. Department meetings facilitate discussion around common assessments and curriculum revision in core courses. Cross-curricular collaboration does take place at leadership

meetings that include department heads from all departments. Time constraints limit opportunities for collaboration although teachers believe it is an essential support for student learning. Formal opportunities for collaboration would provide the faculty with the opportunity to consider student success and school needs. (teachers, department leader, self study)

The entire school staff is involved in promoting the well-being and learning of students. Members of the Ledyard High School community, including the administration, faculty, and support staff are actively involved on a daily basis with the students. Secretaries provide a calm atmosphere in their parent and student interactions. They recognize the needs of students as they present themselves and direct them to the appropriate resources. One of the secretaries volunteers her time to construct the recognition boards for students, staff members and LHS alumni found around the school. The cafeteria follows the state-mandated district wellness policy and participates in a “balanced choice month” program where healthy eating is encouraged. The student support team (SST) was designed to help students who are having difficulty being successful in the classroom. Current participating members believe that additional members, special education personnel, and administrators would support their efforts even more. Thus, the school staff promotes the well-being and learning of students. (guidance counselors, teachers, self-study, school support staff members)

Student success is regularly acknowledged, celebrated, and displayed. Throughout the building, student-work, trophies, honor roll, and articles and photos from the local newspaper are displayed in cases and bulletin boards. The principal acknowledges student successes on morning announcements, the website, and his newsletter, *Ledyard High News*. In addition, the student newsletter, *The Colonel*, also celebrates the successes of LHS students. Recognition of student accomplishments instills a sense of pride in academic, extra-curricular and athletic activities. (parents, facility tour, *The Colonel*, *The Ledyard High News*)

The climate of the school is safe, positive, respectful and supportive, resulting in a sense of pride and ownership. Students, staff members, and parents believe the school to be a safe, secure, positive, and respectful environment. The parent/student handbook, which includes the discipline and attendance policy and supports the mission in an effort to create an environment which promotes meaningful learning, is issued to all students. Students must return a form, signed by their parent and themselves indicating that they have read and understand the contents of the handbook. In 2003, as part of a six million dollar critical needs project, 20 cameras were purchased and installed throughout the building. As a result of several bomb threats, these cameras have been strategically placed at entrances/exits and bathrooms. Students and teachers have noticed a marked decrease in violence and vandalism since the hiring of the new principal, as well. A school resource officer and hall monitor patrol the hallways to ensure safety. Students, parents, and staff members alike speak enthusiastically about the school and take great pride in their accomplishments. They demonstrate their school pride by attending school-sponsored activities, wearing letter jackets, participating in LHS Spirit Week activities, and selling out music and drama performances. Students in the agri-science program extend their classroom learning to the local community through plant and flower sales and animal grooming for staff members. Verbal feedback from parents, teachers, and students indicates that the principal’s effect on school climate has been positive. He instills confidence and empowers teachers as leaders in their classrooms. Both students and parents recognize the principal’s student-centered approach as a positive change. There is a sense of ownership amongst all stakeholders that conveys pride in the school. (parents, students, teachers)

The school board cannot fully support the implementation of the school’s mission and expectations for student learning although its members emphasize their commitment to the students and the school as seen through the support of the instructional council and 9-12 curriculum revision, in particular, the development of the integrated math program and performance graduation requirement

courses. The board cannot actively support the mission and expectations for student learning, however, because of lack of funding from the Town of Ledyard. Impact on the school of town decisions regarding the school's budget includes: reduction of student choice in scheduling at all levels, loss of courses, an increased number of students in study halls, unsafe and outdated science labs, lack of updated technology, loss of teaching faculty members in academic areas, and loss of support staff hours. (self study, teachers, administrators)

### **Commendations**

1. The principal's collaborative relationship with all stakeholders
2. The principal's effective leadership and continued vision for the school with a focus on individual student learning
3. The safe, respectful positive and supportive climate that results in a sense of pride and ownership
4. The regular acknowledgement and celebration of student success
5. The involvement of school staff in promoting the well-being and learning of students

### **Recommendations**

1. Ensure increased autonomy for the principal
2. Ensure an effective revenue stream to support organizational needs
3. Provide professional development that is related to student learning
4. Provide formal opportunities for faculty members to discuss student work
5. Review and revise student grouping practices to move toward greater heterogeneity and more equitable student opportunity

## **Support Standards**

### **6. School Resources for Learning**

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

#### **All Student Support Services**

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

#### **Guidance Services**

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

#### **Health Services**

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

## **Library Information Services**

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

## **Special Education Services**

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

## School Resources for Learning

### Conclusions

Student support services at Ledyard High School have been developed and refined in response to students' needs and the goals expressed in the school's mission and expectations for student learning. While their responsibilities to students and their families vary, the library/media services, health services, guidance service, and special education services all focus on the students who need these resources in order to meet the expectations of LHS. Each service area contributed to the development of the mission statement and to a varying degree, each group has procedures to assess how well services are supporting students in their progress toward meeting school goals. (self-study, counselors, health service personnel)

The needs of students at Ledyard High School vary, and recognizing these needs, the school allocates programs and services whenever possible to enable all students to achieve all expectations for student learning delineated in the mission statement. The school makes every effort to engage every student in the educational program and services of LHS. Students are responsible for the selection of the courses based upon their long-term goals and the learning expectations. The school's 4 X 4 block schedule should allow students to enroll in 32 courses over their four years of high school. However, as a result of limitations in funding leading to decreased course selection availability, students are not provided this opportunity, and only seventy percent of LHS students surveyed said there are equal opportunities for students. A variety of resources such as the credit recovery program (CRP), the virtual learning program, and the Ledyard Youth Services provide students with opportunities to achieve academic success. LHS also provides various programs that allow students to achieve the redesigned social and civic expectations. The school involves students in real time, real world experiences.

The guidance department successfully assists students to reach their full academic potential, but it does not have a formal guidance curriculum to support the school's mission and expectation for learning. The school does not currently have a process to ensure that all students' support services remain consistent with the mission and expectations. Library/media services are highly utilized by individual students and entire classes and are available before school hours, during school hours, and after school hours. Staff members are available to assist students, teachers, and parents/guardians during library hours. Through special programming, inclusion, and collaboration with the entire LHS faculty, special educators facilitate effective learning by students with individual educational plans (IEPs). Additional support services are offered to the LHS student population by resource teachers, special education teachers, a social worker (once per week), two school psychologists, and 4.3 school counselors. However, students are not receiving adequate services in all areas. (self-study, teachers, guidance counselors)

Ledyard High School allocates resources, programs, and services so that students have an equal opportunity to achieve the school's expectations for student learning. Student placement in different levels is based on teacher recommendations regarding student ability. Students in sequential courses must achieve a C- or above average to advance. Additional academic support is available to students including teacher office hours and the Learning Lab. When relevant, IEP goals and 504 accommodations are established to assist in student learning. Many students receive support from paraprofessionals, self-contained classes, collaborative classes, and resource classes. The guidance department does not use a guidance curriculum outlined by the Connecticut School Counselor Association, nor does it adequately implement a response to intervention (RTI) or similar plan. There are four civic and social expectations that have yet to be implemented. The faculty and staff need to develop an effective approach to apply the social and civic expectations in order to encourage students in these practices and to prepare them to meet requirements. (self-study, survey, teachers, guidance counselors, parents, special education teachers)

Ledyard High School student support personnel 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. Student support personnel in the career center regularly and effectively interact and collaborate with teachers, administrators, and the community to gain information, knowledge, and resources needed to enhance student learning. However, instructional aides are not utilized to their full potential. The library media center (LMC) participates in a book loan system with the Ledyard Public Library. LHS students also have the opportunity to participate in a summer reading program with the Ledyard Public Library and Groton Public Library. When services are structured properly, the student support personnel enhance student learning. (self-study, library media staff, guidance counselors, special education teachers)

Ledyard High School support services for learning have been inconsistently evaluated and revised to support improved student learning. The LMC uses monthly statistics about library usage and circulation, including database usage, verbal feedback from students, and teacher questionnaires with book choices to evaluate further purchases and to promote library classroom use. The health services undergo an annual self-evaluation that is reviewed by the coordinator of school nurses (public health nurses). There is also an evaluation for the health services conducted by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHCO). There is no formal process in place to evaluate and improve guidance services or the special education department. The inconsistent evaluation of all student support services negatively impacts the quality of assistance for student learning. (self-study, guidance counselors, library media staff, nurse, special education teachers)

Ledyard High School has a system for effective and ongoing communication with students, parents/guardians, and school personnel designed to keep them informed about the types of available student support services and about identified student needs. Regular school communication with parents, students, and school personnel keep them informed regarding available student support services. School communication with parents about available student support services is conveyed through newsletters and is listed on the school website. Staff members are notified about support service meetings via e-mail, phone calls, staff meetings, and the student support team (SST). Additional information can be found in the student handbook. Discussions with parents and students shows that the level of satisfaction with support services is high. (self-study, teachers, guidance counselors, library media staff, nurse, parents, students, special education teachers)

Ledyard High School student records, including health and immunization records, are maintained in a confidential manner according to federal and state law. Security is an issue because of the lack of a fireproof storage unit; however, current student records are kept in a walk-in vault, and former student records are archived in a storage area. Special education records are maintained in a locked, secured location, and all health records are secured by a password, known only by the nursing staff. A private fax number for the nurse's office is available for receiving confidential health documents. Although all records are confidential and secure, their safety is not guaranteed because of the lack of fireproof storage units. (self-study, tour, guidance counselors, nurse)

Ledyard High School does not have a sufficient number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff members to provide effective counseling, health, special education, and library/media services. Lack of a full time social worker and a one-fifth full-time guidance counselor significantly hinders the guidance department in implementing its guidance services. Thus there is a risk that some students will not receive appropriate support. (self-study, teachers, guidance counselors)

Overall, Ledyard High School provides a full range of comprehensive guidance services, including large and small group meetings with students, parents, and guardians. Guidance counselors work with the same assigned students for their entire high school career. The relationship between student and high school counselor begins with early 9<sup>th</sup> grade course selection. In the spring of a student's LHS 8<sup>th</sup> grade year, counselors visit students at Ledyard Middle School to explain requirements of the high school program, provide guidance in course selection, and discuss pertinent information regarding expectations and policies for the transition to high school. Guidance counselors also include parents/guardians in the transition process by offering an 8<sup>th</sup> grade Parent Night. Guidance counselors meet with their counselees' parents to answer questions and familiarize them with the physical layout of the school. An open house is held in which all LHS faculty, staff, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade parents and students attend. As an official welcome to the school, all incoming 9<sup>th</sup> grade students and their families are invited to a cookout the week preceding the start of school. During a student's final two years of high school, they are highly encouraged to attend a college planning night with their parents and guardians. The guidance department collaborates with the career center in educating students on their future. Resources such as "Do What You Are" personality inventory and the Choices software allow students to conduct extensive research regarding academic and career development. Other career assessments used are the Armed Services Vocational Assessment Battery (ASVAB). LHS guidance counselors spend the majority of their time instructing students academically or responding to crisis situations. Discussions regarding personal, career, college and group counseling regarding specific student concerns are limited by additional guidance counselor duties, lack of certified staff members and an appropriate private group space. The allocation of guidance counselors' time is not done according to the Connecticut State Counselor Associations Recommendations (CSCA). The CSCA recommends that 35-40 percent of a guidance counselor's time should be spent delivering curriculum to students. The LHS Developmental Guidance Curriculum was created in 1999 but is currently not being implemented. As mandated reporters, guidance counselors utilize the department of children and families (DCF) to assist families in crisis. Guidance counselors act as the liaison for students who are involved with the juvenile court system. This could include preparing the Family with Service Needs (FWSN) report and informing the probation/parole officers of students' academic/behavioral performance and attendance. Guidance counselors collaborate with school psychologists in referring families to outside agencies. September 2007 marked LHS's inaugural year of hosting a college fair as a result of student requests. The guidance department adequately supports the special education services for students by participating in planning and placement team (PPT) meetings. During these meetings, guidance counselors provide students' credit summaries and current classroom progress and develop transitional goals for students' individualized education plans (IEPs). Guidance counselors also arrange and facilitate 504 meetings. If a teachers or parents have concerns regarding a student, they may contact the student's guidance counselor. Guidance counselors are active participants in the referral of regular education students to the student support team (SST). The SST is comprised of a school psychologist, registered nurse, two teachers, and the student's guidance counselor, all of whom provide additional interventions to ensure student success. The working relationship between LHS counselors and community social service agencies is positive as all groups work to assist students and families in needs. (self-study, survey, guidance counselors, parents, special education teachers)

Ledyard High School's health services provide extensive preventive health services and direct intervention services, appropriate referrals, mandated services, emergency response mechanisms, and ongoing student health assessments. Preventative health services include vision screening for grades 9 and 11, scoliosis screening for grade 9, hearing screening for grade 11, and physicals for students prior to entering grade 12. Immunizations are provided as needed and sports physicals are conducted annually. Yearly vision and hearing screenings are provided for all special education students. In addition, preventative health services include providing healthy snacks, hygiene supplies, contact lens solutions, medications, dental plans and the availability of an athletic trainer twice a week. The health services checks batteries on defibrillators, provides one-on-one health education to answer questions, and makes

available to students brochures for special agencies and clinics as well as confidentially communicating health concerns of students and teachers to staff members. Direct intervention services include SST meetings, crisis meetings, 504 meetings, PPT meetings, defibrillator training, athletic coverage until 4:00 pm each day, and tending to ill and injured students during the school day. Health services provides referrals for physicians, letters to parents for vision concerns, and phone calls to parents concerning injuries. Emergency response mechanisms include two-way radios, telephones for 9-1-1 calls, and four defibrillators that are placed throughout the building and grounds. Specific needs for nursing care are based on an assessment. At the end of the school year, all student visits are transferred to a hard copy and entered into the student's health record. Health services are in place in accordance with the Connecticut State Health Standards and Laws. The school's health office obtains community health services for students through a dental group which provides families without insurance the opportunity for free oral care. Families with insurance may receive the aforementioned care for a minimal fee. The Lions Club provides services for families for vision care. Results of the Endicott Survey indicate that students, parents, and faculty members largely agree that they feel comfortable going to the nurse's office, the services are sufficiently broad, and the emergency procedures are appropriate. The needs of the school's health services are identified as: a school-based health center, more direct parent contact and communication, evidence of student follow-through on medical advice, and the certification of more staff members in the use of the defibrillators. The Ledyard High School health office provides consistent preventive health services and direct intervention services. (self-study, tour, nurse, students)

The Ledyard High School library/information services program and materials are partially integrated into the school's curriculum and instructional program. The Library and Information Literacy Curriculum is integrated into the Research Expectation for Student Learning and the approved English and Performance Graduation Requirement (PGR) curricula. The Endicott Survey showed 38 percent of students agrees the library has the materials they need, and over half of the staff is either undecided or disagrees that the formal curriculum includes library information services components. The library media specialist (LMS) is not consulted on the development and implementation of curriculum. In order to sufficiently support the library/information services, the LMS solicits book requests from staff members to further support the curriculum and encourage reading appreciation. Teachers regularly visit the library/media center to support instruction. Classes often complete research assignments and PowerPoint presentations and make use of the computer room. The existing library media service does not fully support the school's mission. (self-study, Endicott Survey, library media staff, teachers)

The Ledyard High School Library/Information Services personnel are knowledgeable about the curriculum and support its implementation. Library personnel are informed of the curriculum resource needs when teachers use the library or request resources for specific assignments. LHS does not currently include library service personnel in the implementation, evaluation, or revision of the curriculum; however according to the Endicott Survey, 90 percent of the staff agree that library personnel are knowledgeable when assisting in curriculum and instructional needs. Demonstration of resources allows the LMS to incorporate the library and information literacy curriculum into specific lessons when teachers bring classes to the LMS for research. Social studies and English teachers have been involved in selecting library material to match curriculum based on student feedback. Ledyard High School Library/Information Services personnel adequately support and are knowledgeable about curriculum. (self-study, survey, tour, teachers, library media staff, students)

Ledyard High School LMC does not sufficiently provide a wide range of materials, technologies, and other library/information services that are responsive to the school's student population and is not available to students and faculty and utilized to improve teaching and learning. Books, databases, and periodicals are specifically selected to reflect the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the student population, but the average age of the print collection is over twenty years. Recent weeding of old and

damaged books has significantly reduced the collection size to approximately fifteen books per student (the ideal is twenty five). The collection needs to be increased and brought up to date at an increased level of funding, with particular emphasis on sensitive areas that require frequent updates. The resources are still growing to support the changing learning needs of students. The technology side of the LMC houses forty-five computers whose function is relatively slow because of outdated computers. Each computer is used by at least four students every day. Teachers can reserve the computer room. The age and small size of the collection and the age of the equipment somewhat inhibits the success of the library media center's support of the school's mission. (self-study, survey, tour, teachers, guidance counselors, library media staff, nurse, parents, students, administration, special education teachers)

Ledyard High Schools students, faculty members, 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 is available from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm Monday through Thursday and from 7:30 am to 3:00 pm on Friday. The number and age of the computers limits library services, including access to technology. Library use statistics from the fall 2006 semester show that nearly 70 percent of the high school teachers who do not have departmental technology labs have used the library at least once while 50 percent used it four times or more. According to the Endicott Survey, 71.8 percent of students agree that the school library is available to them before and/or after school. Ledyard High School LMC consistently provides access to all library services affording students the opportunity to enhance their educational experience, but those services request updating and adequate funding. (self-study, survey, tour, library media staff, teachers, students)

Ledyard High School's library/information services program informally encourages independent inquiry by enabling students and faculty to use various school and community information resources and technologies. There is not a formal introduction to the Information Literacy Curriculum (ILC) for students. Presently every student who uses the LMC will learn the ILC with a class. To date, the LMS is working towards creating the opportunity for all students to be exposed to the ILC in a collaborative manner. (self-study, tour, library media staff, students)

Ledyard High School has policies in place for the selection and removal of information resources and the use of technologies and the Internet. The board of education implements a policy that defines and facilitates the process for the selection or removal of information resources. The district has an Internet use policy, and over 80 percent of students knows the school's policies regarding Internet use according to the Endicott Survey. The Connecticut Education Network (CEN) and Sonic Firewall act as the school's filtering software to control student access to the Internet. The IT department fulfills teacher requests in a timely fashion. According to the 5-year technology plan, the district will reduce the average age of equipment by replacing obsolete equipment. Ledyard High School utilizes a policy for the selection and removal of information resources. (self-study, survey, tour, IT staff)

There is a pre-identification process for students who do not meet the expectations for student learning as outlined by the federal, state and local mandates. School personnel are inconsistent with employing aspects of the district-wide flowchart to determine necessary interventions that begin with a referral to the student support team (SST) as defined in the Special Education Policy and Procedures handbook. For the special education identification process, the school generally adheres to the district flowchart as delineated in the Special Education Policy and Procedures handbook. The special education department adequately monitors student progress by communicating with students, parents/guardians, and school personnel regarding student needs. However, of the student support service areas contributes inconsistently regarding the identification, monitoring and referral of students in accordance with local, state, and federal laws. (self-study, parents, teachers, special education teachers)

## **Commendations**

1. Comprehensive health services that contribute to student well-being
2. Collaboration and communication between staff, students, parents/guardians and community
3. LMC database purchases to make current resources available
4. an LMC environment which is welcoming and serves as the hub of the school
5. the active engagement of LMC staff in updating print resources
6. Guidance counselors who provide commendable academic services to students given limited personnel

## **Recommendations**

1. implement the mission statement, academic expectations, and civic and social expectations
2. invite LMC curriculum integration
3. increase LMC technology and upgrade equipment
4. continue LMC collection updating in increased level of funding
5. implement the comprehensive guidance curriculum.
6. employ a response to intervention (RTI) or similar program for regular education students
7. develop a plan to regularly evaluate and revise all school resources for learning
8. utilize a fire proof area for safety of confidential student records
9. increase staffing in the areas of social work and guidance
10. implement a formal evaluation of guidance and special education services

## **Support Standard**

### **7. Community Resources for Learning**

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

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

## Community Resources for Learning

### Conclusions

Ledyard High School engages parents and families as partners in each student's education and encourages their participation in school programs. Teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators frequently contact parents via e-mail and telephone to discuss student progress. The school hosts one open house in the fall and one open house in the spring. The school communicates regularly with parents via a school newsletter, *The Colonel*, and the school website which contains current information and invitations to join various school-sponsored support groups. Parents are encouraged to participate in a wide variety of organizations which support the school. These include the music booster club, athletic booster club, the agri-science booster club, Ledyard Education Advancement Foundation (LEAF), principal advisory committee (PAC), and Project Lead the Way (PTLW) Advisory Committee. Parents are active participants in student planning and placement team and 504 team meetings. Multiple opportunities to participate in their student's education and school programming have fostered strong relationships between the school and families of the students. (self-study, teachers, guidance counselors, administration, parents)

Ledyard High School fosters business/community/higher education partnerships which support student learning. Local business and industry leaders play an integral role in planning and implementing school-to-career programs. Speakers from a variety of local businesses including Foxwoods Resort and Casino, Riley Photographic, Mystic Seaport, Northeast Utilities, and the United States Navy regularly speak at the school with students about career opportunities. Students are provided the opportunity to job shadow at local professional centers such as Backus Hospital and Pfizer. Relationships with Three Rivers Community College, Connecticut College, the University of Connecticut, and Eastern Connecticut State University prepare students for college level studies while taking classes at Ledyard High School. The vocational agriculture program at Ledyard High School offers a supervised agricultural experience (SAE) which pairs students with community volunteers who offer students an agriculture-based career experience at local working farms. Ledyard High School's relationship with local businesses, community agencies and institutions of higher learning support student learning. (self-study, teachers, guidance counselors, administration, parents)

The entire school site and plant does not adequately support all aspects of the education program and support services for student learning. While there are many portions of the school site and plant that do student learning, there are significant parts of the school site and plant which detract from student learning. The school facility construction of 2003 to house the vocational agriculture science program is up-to-date and strongly supports the programming afforded to the 233 students enrolled in the Ledyard High School Vo-Ag program. The school has also recently updated the school library, cafeteria, and parking lots. There are, however, large areas of the original building constructed in 1963 that detract from student learning. These older facilities have begun to deteriorate with leaks in the roof and deteriorating conditions that are hindering student learning, by not providing a clean, safe, up-to-date and technologically enriched environment. In its entirety, the present facilities at Ledyard High School neither adequately support nor enhance student learning (self-study, tour, teachers, students, Endicott survey, administrators, parents)

The school plant and facilities are not in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. Ledyard High School is in compliance with federal and state law as it relates to most fire, health, and safety regulations with the exception of an adequate chemical hygiene safety plan and asbestos exposure. The science laboratories are poorly configured, outdated, inadequately equipped, and pose safety issues with respect to effective supervision of lab activities. Lighting is poor, eyewash stations and full body

showers are not fully functional There are inadequate electrical outlets and the number of students who use the labs in the science classrooms creates an unsafe environment. Health concerns have been raised by some faculty members and students with respect to air quality as well. No effective indoor air quality assessments such as Tools for Schools have been used to measure the air quality. The limited ventilation in the bomb shelter used for physical education activities and athletics creates potential health hazards. The leaks in the roof are causing mold problems and damage to the ceiling, furniture, and equipment in the building. Floor tiles have peeled up, possibly exposing students and the faculty to asbestos. The outdoor bleachers do not have risers and pose an immediate danger. The lack of compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations has created an unsafe and unhealthy environment in areas of the Ledyard High School plant and facilities. (self-study, tour, teachers, students, survey, administration, parents)

Equipment at Ledyard High School is not adequate, properly maintained, catalogued, or replaced when appropriate. Long-term and short-term plans for preventive maintenance are in place, but there is limited evidence that the guidelines articulated in these plans are followed. An out-of-date spreadsheet of furniture and equipment is kept in the central office. It is not clear who is responsible for cataloguing new and used equipment at Ledyard High School. Zero-based budgets inhibit the acquisition of up-to-date and adequate equipment and inhibit effective preventive maintenance and care for existing equipment. Classrooms in the old facility are out-of-date and in need of technology upgrades. Fifty eight percent of the staff either disagrees or strongly disagrees with the statement, “I am satisfied with the availability of educational equipment.” The lack of adequate and properly maintained equipment at Ledyard High School negatively impacts student learning. (self-study, tour, teachers, students, Endicott survey, administrators, parents)

The school’s plan for building and site management related to the appropriate maintenance, repair, and cleanliness of the school plant is not adequately funded. There are two maintenance workers for the entire school district. The overwhelming volume of maintenance and repairs required to upkeep aging facilities stretches this personnel resource. The custodial staff at Ledyard High School consists of one dayshift and five nightshift custodians. The staff at the high school is frustrated by lack of follow-through of the work order system in place. Sixty-two percent of the staff reports dissatisfaction with the response to work orders submitted, and 53 percent believes the school is not well maintained or clean. Those members of the faculty who report satisfaction with the cleanliness and maintenance of the facilities are largely assigned to the new Vo-Ag Center, while teachers assigned to the older facilities are frustrated. The lack of adequate funding for maintenance, repair and cleaning of the school plant and facilities negatively impacts staff morale and health and safety of students, (self-study, tour, teachers, survey, administration, parents)

There are plans to address future program, staffing, facility, and technology needs as well as capital improvement projects. The extent of the facility improvement plan calls for the upgrade and renovation of one science lab per year. There are no plans to address full-scale renovations of aging facilities in the original building at Ledyard High School. The school currently uses SASI to record student and course enrollment and is planning a shift to an online student management software called Power School. It is not clear how the school uses the enrollment and staffing data contained in SASI to adequately inform long-range planning for future programs, staffing, and facilities. To remain in compliance with state regulations, Ledyard High School developed a 5-year technology plan. Teachers have been provided with laptop computers, and computer labs are available to students. The classrooms in the older facility do not contain the infrastructure necessary to support a technology-rich learning environment. Though these plans exist on paper, three-quarters of the board members surveyed disagreed with the statement, “The board currently has a five-year plan to address future needs.” Plans to address future program, staffing, facility and technology needs are limited by inadequate funding and are not a

driving force in the school improvement process. (self-study, tour, teachers, students, Endicott survey, administrators, parents)

The Ledyard High School district and community governing bodies have not ensured 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. Seventy-eight percent of the staff believes the budget is inadequate and does not support professional and instructional needs, and all members of the board of education surveyed were either undecided or disagreed with the statement that the school is adequately funded. Every department at Ledyard High School provided numerous examples of how the inadequate revenues are inhibiting student learning in their content area. The numerous budget cuts, zero-based funding, and lack of funding for maintenance, repairs, supplies, equipment, personnel, and technology seriously hinders effective teaching and learning at Ledyard High School. (self-study, tour, teachers, students, Endicott survey, administration)

Faculty and building administrators are involved in the budgetary process, including its development and implementation. Department chairs and the athletic director solicit input from teachers and coaches in their departments and work with the principal to develop budget proposals. The principal organizes budget proposals and presents the budget requests to the superintendent. The superintendent may make reductions and his budget is then submitted to the board of education. The board of education reviews the budget and may make reductions. The board of education then submits the budget to the town council. The town council may make reductions and then brings the budget to a town meeting. Budget reductions may be made at the Town Meeting. After the Town Meeting, the budget is then brought forward to a budget referendum. If budgets are voted down at the referendum, reductions are made. At each stage of the process, the principal reports that reductions are offered as percentages or lump dollar sums. The principal is involved with decisions regarding where exact reductions are made in the operating budget. There are systems which involve the principal and faculty in the budget development and implementation process. (self-study, department chairs, superintendent, administrators)

### **Commendations**

1. the efforts of Ledyard High School to involve parents in school programming and the school improvement process
2. the support of community members and local businesses
3. the high quality and up-to-date vocational agriculture program plant and facilities

### **Recommendations**

1. investigate, plan, and implement solutions which address the deteriorating condition in the original plant
2. ensure all areas of the plant and facilities are in full compliance with all local, state and federal health and safety guidelines
3. develop and implement a plan which addresses the health and safety concerns in the original plant
4. develop and implement a plan for the ongoing repairs and maintenance of equipment and facilities

5. increase funding for and ensure the creation of a technologically enriched learning environment
6. provide reliable funding for supplies and equipment
7. ensure that staffing levels are sufficient to provide clean, well maintained, and adequate working conditions
8. update the science labs
9. create and implement a process by which the supporting community is made aware of the needs of the school and the real effect of all budget cuts

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

To ensure that it has current information about the school, the Commission has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Commission within sixty (60) days of occurrence any substantive change which negatively impacts the school's adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The report of substantive change must describe the change itself and detail any impact which the change has had on the school's ability to meet CPSS Standards. The Commission's Substantive Change Policy is included in the Appendix on page 76. All other substantive changes should be included in the Two-Year and Five-Year Progress Reports and/or the Annual Report which is required of each member school to ensure that the Commission office has current statistical data on the school.

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

The members of the visiting committee extend their thanks to the Ledyard community for the hospitality extended to the committee during the visit. Particular thanks go to the school principal for his support leading up to and during the visit and to the chair responses to the visiting committee's requests, most of which required timely action. A thank you as well to all of those who participated, such as parents, teachers, school board members, and central office administrators, on Sunday afternoon in the panel presentation, the concurrent sessions, or the teacher interviews. A special thank you to the teachers

whose classes were observed by members of the visiting committee. The last group deserving of special thanks are those students who were willing to allow visiting committee members to shadow them Monday and Tuesday.

The visiting committee members enjoyed their very intense four-day visit to the Ledyard High School and their interactions with the Ledyard community. The visiting committee is confident that the school will respond positively and productively to recommendations contained in the report, just as they so responded during the self-study and during the visit.

**New England Association of Schools and Colleges Accreditation Team**

**Ledyard High School**

**Sunday, March 30, 2008 – Wednesday, April 2, 2008**

Chairperson Ms. Denise M. Boule Principal	Exeter-West Greenwich High School West Greenwich, RI
Assistant Chair Mr. Charles Britton	Amity Regional SHS Woodbridge, CT
Mr. David Chambers	East Windsor High School East Windsor, CT
Adelaide Moran	Shelton High School Shelton, CT
Ms. Connie Laurinat	Manchester High School Manchester, CT
Ms. Bonnie Kegler	Killingly HS Killingly, CT
Ms. Esther Eberly	South Kingstown HS South Kingstown, RI
Ms. Anne Puzzo	Granby Memorial HS Granby, CT
Ms. Rebecca Migliano	Southington High School Southington, CT
Ms. Nora Mocerski	Canton High School Canton, CT
Ms. Terra Piela	Newington High School Newington, CT
Ms. Stacy Whaples	Valley Regional HS Deep River, CT



COMMISSION ON  
PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

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

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