

**New England Association of
School and Colleges, Inc.**

Commission on Public Schools



Commission on Public Schools

**Collaborative Conference Visit Report for
Fairfield Warde High School**

Fairfield, CT

October 04, 2018 - October 05, 2018

David Ebling, Headmaster

School and Community Summary

School and Community Summary

The town of Fairfield, Connecticut is a suburban community located on the shores of Long Island Sound in southern Fairfield County along the Interstate 95 corridor, less than 50 miles from New York City and sharing borders with Westport, Easton, Weston, and Bridgeport. A community rich in history, with many of its landmarks and oldest homes dating back to the pre-Revolutionary War period and a large number of streets and neighborhoods with names reflecting its Native American roots, Fairfield has grown into an affluent, family-oriented town with a nautical and arts influence that boasts five beaches, two public golf courses, two universities, and a vast array of restaurants and stores spread throughout the downtown area. With U.S. Route 1 and Black Rock Turnpike representing its primary economic thoroughfares, Fairfield is home to a blend of local business and national chains, with industry involving professional, scientific, and technical services; education (public/private universities); finance; healthcare; retail; and a mixture of manufacturing, the arts, information technology, public service, administration, and construction. The town's major employers in 2017 are General Electric, Sacred Heart University, Fairfield University and Bigelow Tea Corporation.

The current population of 61,016, a total that has grown over the last seven years, is well-educated, with 62% of residents age 25 or older holding a bachelor's degree or higher. Although an affluent community, with a median household income of \$122,306, a median and a median house value of \$578,900, Fairfield has 4.4% (2,689 people) of its residents living in poverty, which is 4.3% below the state average of 10.5%. Eighty-two percent of Fairfield residents own their properties, and some residents live in subsidized housing. Growing in its diversity, 86% of Fairfield residents are white, 5.7% Hispanic or Latino, 4.7% Asian, and 1.6% African American.

The Fairfield Public School System consists of seventeen schools: eleven elementary schools, an Early Childhood Center, three middle schools, and three high schools. The district additionally has a Community Partnership Program designed to meet the needs of our 18 - 21 population. The Town of Fairfield is also home to a variety of private and parochial schools including Assumption and St. Thomas Aquinas Elementary Schools, The Unquowa School, Fairfield Country Day, Fairfield College Preparatory, and Notre Dame Catholic High School.

In support of our public schools, the Fairfield community allocates significant resources with a per pupil expenditure in 2015-16 of \$17,063 in comparison to the state average of \$16,236. In the same year, Fairfield put forth a total education budget of \$169,171,830, which represents a significant portion of local taxation spent on schools.

Over the last five years, enrollment at Fairfield Warde has ranged from a low of 1,449 in 2013-4 to a high of 1,526 in 2015-6. In 2017-8, the school's total enrollment was 1,504 students, all of whom are supported by 138 teachers, of which 14 are special educators; 13.5 school counselors, social workers, and psychologists; 20 paraprofessionals; 2.5 school nurses; and 6 administrators. The student population identifies as 74% White, 13% Hispanic or Latino, 7% Asian, 3% two or more races, and <1% Black or African American. Female students represent 50.3% of the population with males being 49.7%. In addition, 12.3% of students are identified as special education students, 15.2% are eligible for free or reduced lunch, and 1.9% are English Learners.

Fairfield Warde's four year cohort graduation rate in 2015-16 was 97.1%. In 2016-17 the four year rate was reported at 97.5%. The average daily attendance rate for students is 94% and our teacher attendance rate is 93.4%.

The percentage of students from the class of 2018 that attended a four year college is 82%; two year college is 9%. A smaller percentage of students are joining the military, seeking employment, or attending a college prep school.

In addition to the public school system, students currently at Fairfield Warde can take advantage of programs and library services at the local universities, Sacred Heart, Fairfield, University of Bridgeport and the community colleges, Housatonic and Norwalk. Also, there are several museums in the area or a short train ride to New York City. Our school also has created various internship opportunities for our upper-class students. Students can

engage with local businesses in the spring through a job shadowing experience or week long internship program. In addition, our Business Department, teaches a semester elective, Internship and Career Exploration. This elective is open to all juniors and seniors.

Fairfield Warde is a part of the Early College Experience (ECE) with the University of Connecticut. Several of our Advanced Placement courses are approved in the ECE program and our students receive college credit and accompanying transcripts from the university upon successful completion of the course. Students are eligible to take enrichment courses at the universities or community colleges. Currently, these are not a part of the high school transcripts.

In addition to our National Honor Society, there are honor societies in the world language, math, music, science, English and social studies departments. Each year, several of our students are nominated by our faculty to receive the MVP (Mustang Values Personified) Award for best exemplifying our mission statement at the school. Annually, we present student awards at our Underclass Awards Assembly in June. Students are recognized by grade level and department in the areas of excellence, most improved and scholarship. This annual assembly and presentation is attended by all 9th, 10th, and 11th grade students and teachers. The Junior Book Awards from numerous colleges are also presented at this assembly. The Senior Awards Night is held before graduation for the numerous awards in the academic areas and the presentation of scholarships by the High School Scholarship Foundation of Fairfield. The foundation is a community organization responsible for awarding scholarships to our senior class. Finally, Fairfield Warde flies an Honor Flag to recognize groups or individuals who have made a significant contribution in our school or community aligned with our mission statement.

Core Values, Beliefs, and Vision of the Graduate

[Core Values and Beliefs](#)

[Fairfield Public Schools: Vision of the Graduate](#)

LEARNING CULTURE

Learning Culture

The school provides a safe learning culture that ensures equity and fosters shared values among learners, educators, families, and members of the school community. These shared values drive student learning as well as policy, practice, and decision-making while promoting a spirit of collaboration, shared ownership, pride, leadership, social responsibility, and civic engagement. The school community sets high standards for student learning, fosters a growth mindset, and facilitates continuous school improvement to realize the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate.

1. The school community provides a safe, positive, respectful, and inclusive culture that ensures equity and honors diversity in identity and thought.
2. The school's core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate drive student learning, professional practices, learning support, and the provision and allocation of learning resources.
3. The school community takes collective responsibility for the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional well-being of every student and can demonstrate how each student is known, valued, and connected to the school community.
4. The school community's professional culture demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement through the use of research, collaborative learning, innovation, and reflection.
5. The school's culture promotes intellectual risk taking and personal and professional growth.
6. The school has an inclusive definition of leadership and provides school leaders with the authority and responsibility to improve student learning.
7. The school culture fosters civic engagement and social and personal responsibility.

STUDENT LEARNING

Student Learning

The school has a vision of the graduate that includes the attainment of transferable skills, disciplinary/interdisciplinary knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary to prepare learners for their future. Students are assured consistent learning outcomes through a defined curricular experience and have the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in a variety of creative ways. Students actively participate in authentic learning experiences while practicing the skills and habits of mind to regularly reflect upon, and take ownership of, their learning.

1. The school has a vision of the graduate that includes the attainment of transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success and provides feedback to learners and their families on each learner's progress in achieving this vision.
2. There is a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments that includes units of study with guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, and skills and integrates the school's vision of the graduate.
3. Curriculum ensures that learners demonstrate a depth of understanding over a breadth of knowledge.
4. Instructional practices are designed to meet the learning needs of each student.
5. Students are active learners who have opportunities to lead their own learning.
6. Learners regularly engage in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills.
7. Learners demonstrate their learning through a variety of assessment strategies that inform classroom instruction and curriculum.
8. Learners have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning, receive corrective feedback, and use this feedback in meaningful ways to support their learning.
9. Learners use technology across all curricular areas to support, enhance, and demonstrate their learning.

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

Professional Practices

The school maintains and implements a school improvement/growth plan, organizational practices, and productive community relationships to meet and support student learning needs. Educators engage in ongoing reflection, collaboration, and professional development to improve their practice and examine evidence of student learning and well-being to improve curriculum, instruction, assessment practices, programs, and services.

1. The school engages all stakeholders in the development and implementation of a school improvement/growth plan, which reflects the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate.
2. Educators engage in ongoing reflection, formal and informal collaboration, and professional development to improve student learning and well-being.
3. Educators examine evidence of student learning and well-being to improve curriculum, instruction, assessment practices, and programs and services.
4. Collaborative structures and processes support coordination and implementation of curriculum.
5. School-wide organizational practices are designed to meet the learning needs of each student.
6. Educators develop productive student, family, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support learning.

LEARNING SUPPORT

Learning Support

The school has timely, directed, and coordinated interventions for all students. The school provides targeted supports to meet each student's individual needs, including counseling services, health services, library/information services, and other appropriate support services to assist each student in meeting the school's vision of the graduate.

1. All students receive appropriate intervention strategies to support their academic, social, and emotional success.
2. All students receive counseling services that meet their personal, social, emotional, academic, career, and college counseling needs from adequate, certified/licensed personnel.
3. All students receive health services that ensure their physical and emotional well-being from adequate, certified/licensed personnel.
4. All students receive library/information services that support their learning from adequate, certified/licensed personnel.
5. Identified English Language Learners and students with special needs and 504 plans receive appropriate programs and services that support their learning from adequate, certified/licensed personnel.

LEARNING RESOURCES

Learning Resources

The school has adequate and appropriate time, funding, and facilities to support the realization of its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate. The school and school community provide time, funding, and facilities for student learning and support; teacher collaboration and professional growth; and full implementation of curricular and co-curricular programs in the school. The school has appropriate plans, protocols, and infrastructure in place to ensure consistent delivery of its curriculum, programs, and services.

1. The community and district provide school buildings and facilities that support the delivery of high-quality curriculum, programs, and services.
2. The school/district provides time and financial resources to enable researched-based instruction, professional growth, and the development, implementation, and improvement of school programs and services.
3. The community and the district's governing body provide adequate and dependable funding to fully implement the curriculum, including co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities.
4. The school/district has short-term and long-term plans to address the capital and maintenance needs of its building and facilities.
5. The school has infrastructure and protocols in place to ensure effective responses in crisis situations.

Introduction

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 three Commissions: the Commission on Independent Schools (CIS); the Commission on Public Schools (CPS), which is comprised of the Committee on Public Secondary Schools (CPSS), the Committee on Technical and Career Institutions (CTCI), and the Committee on Public Elementary and Middle Schools (CPEMS); and the Commission on International Education (CIE).

As the responsible agency for matters of the evaluation and accreditation of public school member institutions, CPS requires visiting teams to assess the degree to which schools align with the qualitative Standards for Accreditation. The Standards are *Learning Culture, Student Learning, Professional Practices, Learning Support, and Learning Resources*.

The accreditation program for public schools involves a five-step process: the self-reflection conducted by stakeholders at the school; the Collaborative Conference visit, conducted by a team of peer educators and NEASC representatives; the school's development and implementation of a growth/improvement plan; the Decennial Accreditation visit conducted by a team of peer educators and NEASC representatives; and the follow-up program carried out by the school to implement the findings of its own self-reflection, the recommendations of the visiting team, and those identified by the Committee in the follow-up process. Continued accreditation requires that the school participate in the accreditation process over the ten-year cycle and that it show continued progress addressing identified needs.

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit - The School Self-Reflection

Accreditation coordinators and a steering committee comprised of the professional staff were appointed to supervise the school's self-reflection and Accreditation process. At Fairfield Warde High School, a committee that included the principal, supervised all aspects of the Accreditation process. The steering committee organized an appropriate committee or committees to determine the quality of all programs, activities, and facilities available for young people by completing the school self-reflection.

Public schools evaluated by the Commission on Public Schools must complete appropriate materials to assess their alignment with the Standards for Accreditation and the quality of their educational offerings in light of the school's core values, beliefs, vision of the graduate, and unique student population. Fairfield Warde High School used questionnaires developed by the Commission on Public Schools 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-reflection.

In addition, the professional staff was required to read and vote on Part 2 of the self-reflection to ensure that all voices were heard related to the alignment of the school to the Standards for Accreditation. All professional staff members were expected to participate in the self-reflection process either by participating on a committee or by participating in discussion and evidence gathering to support the school's alignment to the Standards.

The Process Used by the Visiting Team

A visiting team of four (4) members was assigned by the Commission on Public Schools to conduct a Collaborative Conference visit to Fairfield Warde High School. The visiting team members spent two days in Fairfield, Connecticut; reviewed the self-reflection documents, which had been prepared for their examination;

met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students and parents; and visited classes to determine the degree to which the school aligns with the Committee on Public Secondary Schools' and Public Elementary and Middle Schools' Standards for Accreditation. The team also reviewed the proposed priority areas for the school's growth plan to be developed as part of the Accreditation process.

Each conclusion in the report was agreed to by visiting team consensus. Sources of evidence for each conclusion drawn by the visiting team are included within each section of the report. The report includes commendations and recommendations that, in the visiting team's judgment, will be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning and implement its plan for growth and improvement.

This report of the findings of the visiting team will be forwarded to the Committee on Public Secondary Schools or the Committee on Public Elementary and Middle Schools, which will make a decision on the Accreditation of Fairfield Warde High School, School.

Foundational Element Ratings

Foundational Element Ratings

Foundational Elements	School's Rating	Visitors' Rating
1.1a - Learning Culture	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
1.2a - Learning Culture	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
2.2a - Student Learning	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
3.1a - Professional Practices	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
4.1a - Learning Support	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
5.1a - Learning Resources	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 1.1a - Learning Culture

Narrative

Fairfield Warde has a very positive learning culture. Visitors immediately notice the WARDE acronym, Welcoming, Academic, Respectful, Dynamic, and Ethical on the wall and sense it just as quickly in the students and the staff. Students proudly recite the WARDE core values and in interviews stressed that they were much more than words. This culture contributes to the positivity and the safety of the school. In addition to the positive learning culture, the school community at Fairfield Warde High School provides a purposefully safe environment. Multiple exterior doors have been narrowed down to three points of entry accessible to students, and once the school day has started, all doors are locked and visitors must be buzzed into the lobby where they are met by the lobby security receptionist. Visitors must show a valid ID after which they receive a visitor's badge and report to the main office for further assistance and direction. In addition to the lobby security receptionist who screens visitors, there is also a full-time campus security guard, a school resource officer, and several security cameras throughout both the interior and exterior of the building. Moreover, FWHS has a School Safety Committee who assures policies are reflective of the school's dedication to safety and security. There are also clear protocols for fire, evacuation, and lockdown drills, all of which are practiced on a monthly basis.

Rating

Meets

Foundational Element 1.2a - Learning Culture

Narrative

The school has a written document describing its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate. While this document has been approved, the transferable skills of the vision of the graduate have yet to be fully implemented into the school's curriculum. In addition, the school has not yet planned for the assessment of the transferable skills or the method by which assessment results will be shared to indicate individual student progress and whole-school progress.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 2.2a - Student Learning

Narrative

There is currently a written curriculum for every course. All curriculum has been completed in a consistent format for all departments at the school and for all grade levels throughout the district. The format is highly professional, very clear, and extremely useful for teachers. All curricula include critical areas of focus, pacing guides, course overviews, units of study with organizing ideas and essential questions, alignment with Connecticut Core Standards, instructional strategies, and assessment suggestions. Each curriculum document can be found online on the school's website making it available to the entire school community in easy to access, clearly delineated pages organized by subject area. There is currently a seven-year cycle for curriculum writing (also shared on the school's website) that is overseen by building level and district level curriculum leaders and curriculum coordinators.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 3.1a - Professional Practices

Narrative

The school improvement plan is updated yearly and is aligned with the Fairfield Public Schools District Improvement Plan, a strategic plan outlined for 2015-2020. The school improvement plan reflects the schools core values, beliefs about learning, and ultimately will reflect the commitment to instilling in students the transferable skills of the vision of the graduate. The most recent version of the plan addresses the commitment to a rigorous, comprehensive instructional program and high quality instruction; common assessments aligned to curriculum; instructional strategies appropriate for teaching in the block schedule; a positive school climate; and the improvement of intervention efforts to ensure success for all students.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 4.1a - Learning Support

Narrative

There are systems in place at Fairfield Warde High School including Scientific Research Based Intervention (SRBI), a collaborative teaching model with a special education teacher, and other supports in and out of the classroom for students. However, the ability to meet the needs, particularly of non-identified students, on daily basis in the regular education classroom needs improvement and many teachers request more professional development in this area.

In addition, the school has identified a need to strengthen its process for identifying and referring students, in particular, those who need additional assistance through the Scientific Research Based Intervention (SRBI) Program.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 5.1a - Learning Resources

Narrative

The school building and facilities support the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services. The thoughtfully designed and organized "house system" ensures a safe and secure environment, as well as fostering a healthy and positive culture for students and adults. The inclusion of technology, common spaces for students and staff, and the flexibility to accommodate learning supports curriculum and programs. The building, which is meticulously clean and well-maintained, clearly meets all applicable federal and state laws and complies with local fire, health, and safety regulations.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Standard 1 - Learning Culture

Narrative

The school community at Fairfield Warde High School excels in providing a safe, positive, respectful, and inclusive culture. The community of FWHS effectively achieves the traditional WARDE acronym, which stands for Welcoming, Academic, Respectful, Dynamic, and Ethical. Students proudly recite the WARDE core values and in interviews stressed that they were much more than words. The students recognize their welcoming environment and were quick to report that as grade 8 students preparing for transition to high school and again as freshmen, they were welcomed into the Warde family with open arms. Students used the term "seamless transition to high school" and described the transition to FWHS from middle school as "much easier than I thought it would be." Faculty members take great pride in the welcoming environment, and as proud as the faculty is, students who led the tour and random students interviewed echo that sentiment of pride to a person.

According to the survey completed by students, staff, and a very high percentage of parents, the majority feel that FWHS is a very safe environment for students and staff members. Ninety-six percent of students in the survey responded that they feel safe much of the time, most of the time, or all of the time. That sentiment is shared by the faculty; 98 percent indicated that they felt safe much of the time, almost all of the time, or all of the time. The school community took advantage during the administration of the survey to review their security procedures and, as a result, has shifted from multiple entry ways to just three points of entry accessible to students. Once the school day has started, all doors are locked and visitors must be buzzed into the lobby where they are met by the lobby security receptionist. Visitors must present a valid ID in order to complete a background check, after which they receive a visitor's badge and report to the main office for further assistance and direction. In addition to the lobby security receptionist who screens visitors, there is a full-time campus security guard, a school resource officer, and several security cameras throughout both the interior and exterior of the building. Moreover, FWHS has a School Safety Committee who assures policies are reflective of the school's dedication to safety and security.

Fairfield Warde High School ensures equity and honors diversity. The WARDE acronym including the word "respectful" encapsulates this sentiment. Students shared without hesitation that FWHS is a collaborative environment where everyone feels accepted and teachers are vested in knowing each member of the student body. In the survey 80 percent of students agreed that "people like me feel welcome almost all of the time or all of the time. Additionally, when surveyed "if people treated students from different backgrounds with respect", 74 percent agreed all the time or almost all the time. Seventy-five percent of students also felt that "teachers treat me with respect even if they don't know me" almost all of the time or all of the time. In interviews, students voiced that the school features a "great students-teacher connection" and articulated as well that "teachers want to see us grow." Students also expressed that they hold each other accountable to embody respect for each other.

FWHS works to promote equity and diversity, as well as addressing learning gaps and social disparities through Voices for Equity, which was originally formed as the Fairfield Warde Achievement Gap Task Force. This group, made up of students and teachers was created in 2016 to improve relationships between students of color, the LGBTQ community, and other student interest groups. The overarching mission of the group is to brainstorm how to close the achievement gap that may exist among all diverse students in the school system, region, state, and the nation, as well. The group's efforts began as a student-led initiative whereby students discussed their identities as well as academic and social challenges faced because of those identities. Voices for Equity has made such a positive impact within FWHS that they present their work across the district, the state, and New England, a testament to their commitment towards ensuring equity and honoring diversity. Voices for Equity is a model program for high schools in New England to emulate.

In addition to Voices for Equity, FWHS has a robust English Learner program that provides students from various cultures and backgrounds the necessary supports to thrive in school. This program has two full-time EL teachers and offers a Newcomer Academy for incoming English Learners. Furthermore, the EL program offers both sheltered instruction and push-in supports across many disciplines at FWHS.

Fairfield Warde High School's core values and beliefs about learning drive student learning, professional practices, learning support, and the provision and allocation of learning resources. FWHS lives its core values and beliefs, as evidenced by the strong visual presence of the WARDE acronym at the school entrance and the genuine commitment of the school community to exemplify the values, even instilling them in grade 8 students early in their transition to high school. The survey indicates that 91 percent of students, 92 percent of faculty, and 84 percent of parents are familiar or very familiar with the school's core values and beliefs and the connection to the school's mission and vision. In regards to the impact of core values on professional practices, the Fairfield School District and Fairfield Warde High School are committed to continuous improvement, linking individual professional practice (teacher goals) with a delineated plan for improvement through the year 2020. The continuum connects teacher goals with department goals, school goals, and district goals. For the 2017-18 school year, Fairfield Warde school-wide goals, in line with the district improvement plan, included: elimination of achievement gap, improvement of graduation rate, Scientific Research Based Intervention (SRBI), and higher overall performance of all students.

In terms of learning support, FWHS recently underwent a restructuring of their library media center, which is now referred to as the learning commons, a space that affords students academic and creative supports. This area serves as an active learning environment for students featuring collaboration and the use of technology. The school's self-reflection refers to its development being attributed to models from colleges along with the input of a team to redesign the space to offer more functionality to students. In this effort, the school has been highly successful. During several visits to the learning commons, students worked individually, in small groups, or larger groups on homework or various classroom projects often with Chromebooks.

In reference to how core values and beliefs about learning drive the provision and allocation of learning resources, one can cite the budget for FWHS in its continued support for the "three house" plan. The house structure splits the school into three administratively distinct sections. Each house has a housemaster, a dean, and three school counselors who help students feel welcomed and supported in school. Students are assigned to a homeroom in one house and see that same teacher every day throughout their four years at FWHS. Students spoke very fondly of the house structure and highlighted the annual "Battle of the Houses" as one of the favorite times of the year as it has as its primary goal to promote the house identity and school spirit. The effort to create a smaller school feeling within the large comprehensive high school is very effective, just with the daily homeroom presence serving as the consistent house identity.

While Fairfield Warde's core values and beliefs about learning clearly drive student learning and professional practices, the school acknowledges that there is still work to be done to implement the school's newly adopted vision of the graduate as part of the school's learning culture. FWHS recently adopted its vision of the graduate in May 2018 as part of a district-wide project; however, the school has yet to decide how to best inculcate the transferable skills of the vision of the graduate into the learning culture of the school, particularly as part of course assessments designed to measure students' acquisition of the skills alongside the well-established core values and beliefs.

The school community takes collective responsibility for the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional well-being of every student and can demonstrate how each student is known, valued, and connected to the school community. Academics at FWHS span a wide assortment of subjects that meet the diverse academic, creative, artistic, and vocational needs of a variety of learners as evidenced by the school's program of studies. The multitude of courses offered challenge students who are interested in such learning opportunities as working on car engines, constructing furniture, drafting three-dimensional models, working in a restaurant, analyzing vector operations, or examining the American character through a combination of historical and literary texts.

While catering to student's intellectual needs is a cornerstone of all schools, the school community at Fairfield Warde excels in addressing the physical, social, and emotional well-being of students as well. The physical education department, focusing on fitness for life alongside the varied athletic opportunities, promotes students' physical well-being. In terms of social well-being, students are able to join a wide variety of clubs that meet regularly during the designated time in the Wednesday school day schedule. The school's activities calendar lists the various athletic, cultural, and social events throughout the month at FWHS. A time honored tradition of note is the Fairfield Warde Honor Flag, which is used to honor an outstanding victory or achievement resulting in the

raising of the honor flag in front of the school, the making of an announcement to celebrate that victory or achievement, and a listing posted on a prominent bulletin board of recent honor flag awardees in the main lobby.

The school's faculty and administration take collective responsibility for each learner's academic growth and social-emotional growth. In student interviews it was clear that teachers offer support to students as needed. Comments by students included, "Even if I had the teacher two years ago, I feel I could go to them if I needed help." One student offered that he had received a full scholarship to a local private school but decided to attend FWHS as there was "more sense of a community than at the private school." Ninety-three percent concur that at this school, at least one caring adult knows me well according to the student survey. Ninety percent of parents surveyed agreed with the statement that all adults (in the school) seem to take responsibility for the academic well-being and the social and emotional well-being of my child even if they do not teach him or her. During interviews, parents voiced their appreciation for the welcoming environment, caring adults, challenging opportunities, supportive teachers, and the teacher communication home to parents.

The Counseling Center at FWHS also offers services that affirm the school's commitment to the emotional well-being of its students. Parents voiced support for the counselors, psychologists, and social workers who readily are accessible and meet with parents and/or students for a number of issues including family situations or anxiety. Ninety-two percent of parents surveyed agreed that it was somewhat true, mostly true, or totally true that "I know who to go to in this school if my child needs social or emotional help". In addition, approximately the same percentage of parents agreed that "if my child needs services or supports, this school has a clear and timely referral process". Given the growing diversity and the wide range of student skill sets at FWHS, staff are very sincere in their interest in finding additional ways to support students both academically and emotionally. Accordingly, the faculty at FWHS is working to refine its Scientific Research Based Interventions (SRBI) to assist in this endeavor.

Fairfield Warde's professional culture is undergoing a strengthening to its commitment to continuous improvement through the use of research, collaborative learning, innovation, and reflection. Teachers at FWHS collaborate within their individual departments through Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) scheduled during as part of the school day. Every four days, teachers meet in their PLTs with the expectation that the discussion of teaching practices and strategies, tracking student progress, and brainstorming innovative classroom ideas will serve as the agenda for that time period. Collaborative learning with colleagues is also a desired model that FWHS has implemented and has as a goal to utilize on a regular basis. Currently, there is time scheduled each week for collaboration and planning between special education and regular education teachers, which allows for a more cohesive co-taught model classroom for the student learning experience. There is also some collaboration across the disciplines during full-staff professional development workshops.

Teachers and administrators participate in a goal plan that provides for frequent reflection on current practice and ways to improve. The school's self-reflection acknowledges the robust process of the goal plan, but also addresses the need for more teacher research and innovation as part of the professional culture. During the course of the school year there are opportunities for staff to choose from different peer-facilitated developmental workshops. By working as a community and sharing knowledge across the disciplines, something that was voiced by teachers to be of strong interest, teachers hope to be able to strengthen and innovate methodologies. The faculty has identified room for growth and improvement in this area, as evidenced by responses to a question concerning how much on-site workshops or training have helped to improve student learning. The response to this faculty survey question reported that only 27 percent of faculty agreed quite a bit or a great deal. In addition, 61 percent agreed quite a bit or a great deal that they had benefited from collaborative planning time with colleagues. It is also the hope that their professional learning culture will continue to be impacted positively as the school's new 1:1 Chromebook initiative has prompted staff to collaborate over how the devices can be used meaningfully throughout classroom learning experiences.

The school's self-reflection indicates that while the school's culture promotes some intellectual risk-taking and personal and professional growth, there is the potential for further growth in this area. On the student survey, 95 percent of students stated that it is at least somewhat true that they are encouraged to try new things or experiment. Similarly, as part of the faculty survey, 99 percent of teachers believe that they are supporting students in this way. A growth mindset appears evident in the learning culture in that 93 percent of students surveyed agree that "I learn that mistakes are part of my learning process". Across different disciplines, learning

through mistakes takes on many forms. For example, in world language classes, students are expected to speak aloud to peers and their teacher in the study of a world language. Classes observed indicate that the majority of the course is conducted in the language, rather than English. In English classes, the writing process is built around drafting and reviewing, a technique that often involves students openly sharing their writing with each other through peer-reviews and subsequently using that feedback to inform and revise their own writing. In the Physics 40 course, students are invited to design and conduct an experiment to offer information about a sprinter's acceleration. Student personal growth is supported through activities that require experimentation and reflection. Likewise, technology education has focused on the Universal Systems Model and the importance of feedback in learning from mistakes. A significant area of pride in the Fairfield Warde professional community comes from teacher-initiated enrichment, as well.

The administrative team at FWHS consistently encourages teachers to branch out and learn new delivery methods for teaching and to take risks by presenting new pedagogies before their peers. Students indicated that their classroom activities are varied throughout the day and often they feel as if teachers are trying new ways to explain and/or present new material. In the school's survey, students credited teachers with 90 percent agreeing that "at this school, teachers seem open to trying new ideas". Teachers indicated that new models of pedagogy could be expanded upon as staff feel they would benefit from additional opportunities for in-house professional development designed and implemented by their peers learning directly from one another.

Fairfield Warde has an inclusive definition of leadership and provides school leaders with the authority and responsibility to improve student learning. FWHS ensures the headmaster, in conjunction with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that sets high standards for student achievement. Administrators from the Fairfield School District meet monthly with the superintendent to discuss the district improvement plan, academic expectations, and district policies. Administrators from FWHS meet on a weekly basis to discuss the school improvement plan and its alignment with the district improvement plan. In addition, curriculum leaders meet with housemasters to implement district initiatives and address curricular concerns. Weekly staff meetings that include administrators, school counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and deans also help to articulate this goal. Though the high school is part of a large school district with a well-defined district improvement plan and strategic plan, the headmaster is given the appropriate level of decision-making authority to lead the school effectively, efficiently, safely, and productively.

According to the school's survey, 85 percent of the faculty believe that it is at least somewhat true that school administrators incorporate faculty input when making school improvements, and 60 percent of them mostly or totally believe they are given leadership opportunities essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. This percentage mirrors the students' beliefs in that 65 percent of students mostly or totally feel that it is true that they are given important leadership opportunities. Students and parents feel that they know the administration well and speak highly of them. This is due to their presence and accessibility in the school, but also to the house structure. The house to which a student is assigned is designed to create a familiarity with the housemaster and office staff. Eighty-five percent of parents agree that it is mostly true or totally true that the headmaster and other administrators lead in ways that are consistent with the school's core values.

Central office staff and building administrators at FWHS reported that efforts are being made to enhance the PLT model so as to augment the effectiveness of the teacher teams' ability to work together to examine data; subsequently housemasters shared that in the near future they will work alongside a PLT in their house to examine both the meeting structure and protocols for examining student work and data. Additionally, teachers shared that their voices are heard through the School Council, the House Council, and by the headmaster himself who is always open to staff feedback and suggestions in making the PLT a more effective structure.

Fairfield Warde High School fosters civic engagement as well as social and personal responsibility. Eighty-seven percent of students at least somewhat believe they make contributions to the school community, while 86 percent of teachers at least somewhat believe they help students in this endeavor. Students at FWHS have the ability to engage in activities and clubs that reach out to their peers and to their community during activity periods. Numerous clubs are available that promote social and personal responsibility. For example, Key Club members have opportunities to serve, build character, and develop leadership through various school and community events. The Student Forum encourages students to speak out for positive change in the school community. In

addition, Voices for Equity, has been addressing issues of social justice as its core mission. Civic engagement was also evident at the school's Achievement Gap Task Force Forum held on April 27, 2017. Students and staff members from Fairfield Warde High School, Fairfield Ludlowe High School, and a visiting urban school convened at Warde for three hours. The students, most of whom were from minority backgrounds, shared differences and similarities in their educational opportunities and experiences. In 2017-18, the committee expanded the forum to be a regional event, which was held at Southern Connecticut State University for a full day.

Students from FWHS have shared lessons on social responsibility with the faculty at two different faculty meetings that include some of their experiences at the school resulting from them having backgrounds different from the majority of the faculty. Two English teachers have engaged ninth grade students in discussions about artifacts designed to introduce and explore institutional racism as a means of front-loading thematic issues in *To Kill A Mockingbird*. In Fairfield Warde's contemporary Global Literature class, students write a culminating response to Nobel prize winning economist, Angus Deaton, supporting or refuting his idea that global aid hurts more than it helps.

In the survey, 94 percent of students indicate that it is mostly true or totally true that "I take responsibility for my own actions". The FWHS deans, alongside faculty members, developed a Civic and Social Expectations Rubric focused on showing respect, demonstrating responsibility, and exhibiting positive citizenship. These values have a strong visible presence on posters hung in the classrooms.

Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- classroom observations
- community members
- NEASC survey
- parents
- school board
- school leadership
- school support staff
- self-reflection
- students
- teachers

Standard 2 - Student Learning

Narrative

Fairfield Warde High School has developed a vision of the graduate that includes transferable skills as well as the knowledge, understandings, and disposition necessary for future success. The vision of the graduate was approved in the spring of 2018 after an inclusive district-wide process that brought together students, parents, teachers, and administrators resulting in a PreK-12 document that is expected to serve and unite all of the Fairfield schools, including the sister high school. Teachers are well aware of this effort and the school community is strongly committed to the transferable skills outlined in the document that promotes the development of all students as collaborators, communicators, critical thinkers, responsible citizens, innovators, and goal directed, resilient learners. The district as a whole is prepared for the future implementation and assessment of these skills as well as their integration into curriculum. A statement that is included in the document speaks to the expectation of the school and district in that, "The fulfillment of the mission, for all students, PK – 12+, demands our ongoing commitment to realize the Vision of a Graduate."

Due to the fact that the vision of the graduate was recently completed it has yet to be included in curriculum and integrated into current instructional practices and assessments. The central office administration is very supportive of the school's efforts to promote the vision of the graduate and it is an identified goal of the school improvement plan, a plan that is based on the district improvement plan. Once the vision of the graduate is embedded fully into the curriculum of the various departments, the school will be well prepared to assess and communicate individual learner progress toward achieving the school's vision of the graduate and, as well, the school will be well equipped to annually report on whole-school progress toward learner achievement of the vision of the graduate.

Though FWHS has not yet developed a mechanism for assessing these transferable skills and providing feedback to learners and their families on each learner's progress in achieving this vision of the graduate, the school does have well-established core values and beliefs about student learning and there is a mechanism to measure student performance on recently developed academic expectations. There are also school-wide rubrics for civic and social expectations that highlights respect, responsibility, and citizenship. Students currently work toward the knowledge, understandings, and dispositions of the civic and social expectations of the school and understand that this serves as the basis for an annual grade on the report card.

At FWHS, there is currently a written curriculum for every course. All curriculum has been completed in a consistent format for all departments at the school and for all grade levels throughout the district. The format is highly professional, very clear, and extremely useful for teachers. All curricula include critical areas of focus, pacing guides, course overviews, units of study with organizing ideas and essential questions, alignment with Connecticut Core Standards, instructional strategies, and assessment suggestions. Each curriculum document is accessible online on the school's website making it available to the entire school community in easy to access, clearly delineated pages organized by subject area. There is currently a seven-year cycle for curriculum writing that is also shared on the school's website that is overseen by building level and district level curriculum leaders and curriculum coordinators.

Both the current building administration and central office administration cite the writing of curriculum as one of the highest district priorities and the expectation is that the transferable skills of the vision of the graduate will be included in the next iteration of curriculum as it is completed. Seventy-five percent of teachers in the survey indicate that they have a great deal or some influence in developing the curriculum; however, it was expressed by some teachers that there have been delays in updating certain curriculum areas. Their impression is that this is due to budget cuts or a re-prioritization of curriculum writing. Even prior to incorporating the vision of the graduate completely in curriculum documents in the revision cycle, the school plans to address the need to include assessments throughout departmental courses that will measure students' achievement of the transferable skills of the vision of the graduate.

Curriculum documents stress a depth of understanding over a breadth of knowledge. Thematic units serve as the

structure for the district's curricula. For example, the Grade 9 Global Studies and the Grade 10 Modern Global Studies courses contain four units with content standards and compelling questions highlighting the expectations for each unit. The science curriculum is similar in nature. The Biology curriculum includes four units each with performance standards and the appropriate Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). The Chemistry curriculum includes five units with standards also delineated as in the Biology course. The Grade 9 and 10 English curriculum contains six thematic units; Grade 11 and 12 contain seven units. Each thematic unit highlights the expected reading focus, writing focus, grammar/usage/mechanics focus, and the nature of the summative assessment for the unit. Each summative assessment is focused on a project-based writing assignment or analysis.

The school's survey indicates that 72 percent of students feel that it is mostly true or totally true that "in class my teacher emphasizes deep thinking rather than learning facts". Over 77 percent of students also responded that "my teacher emphasizes problem-solving" was mostly true or totally true. In addition, 71 percent of students believe that "my teacher helps us apply our knowledge to real life situations". In classroom observations and student interviews it was evident that the curriculum demonstrates a depth of understanding over a breadth of knowledge. It was noted in observations of a math class that students worked in groups to solve a geometric theorem explaining and rationalizing their steps in detail with each other. In world language classes the preponderance of the teacher instruction and student dialogue is in the target language. Physical education courses are focused on fitness goals that are established individually with the expectation that they will be met by the students.

There were articulated examples by students in interviews and tours, as well as classroom observations, that learners engage in curricular opportunities that emphasize project-based learning and authentic learning experiences. Highlighted examples include Child Development course experiences that are centered on running a preschool, myriad Culinary opportunities culminating in a full-scale restaurant run by students for faculty members and guests, a dedicated black box theater providing authentic experiences and settings for theater classes and smaller performances, and a graphics lab that includes digital design opportunities as well as the design and printing of t-shirts and other clothing items. Project-based learning was further supported in the faculty survey indicating that 69 percent of teachers mostly or totally agree with the statement that "in my class, I use project-based approaches to help students learn course materials deeply". Seventy-two percent of students concurred that "my teacher uses projects to help us learn course materials deeply".

The American Studies course for juniors is a course that serves as an exemplar for interdisciplinary learning in this school. Taught jointly by a social studies and English teacher, the course stresses long-term projects based on student choice and interests. In student interviews, one student described a project that was a documentary in which she interviewed people concerning the notion of free speech in college. A visit to the class resulted in students overwhelmingly voicing their support for the course due to the nature of learning both English literature and social studies together, the deep level of discussions based on identifying the connection of literature to the period of time that gave it birth, and the individualized projects that are a hallmark of the course.

While interdisciplinary learning is an interest of many teachers, it was noted by teachers that it is very difficult to schedule these opportunities consistently. The school's self-reflection acknowledges that curriculum documents, with the exception of American Studies, lack guidance on interdisciplinary connections. The teacher survey indicates that only 37 percent of staff mostly or totally agree with the statement "students have opportunities to learn in ways that combine different subjects". In the school's self-reflection and in interviews, teachers acknowledged that both informal interdisciplinary classroom work and formal cross-curricular connections, though an area of strong interest, are currently limited.

Conversations confirmed that faculty and staff feel that developing instructional practices designed to meet the learning needs of each student is a recognized area of growth for the school. On the student survey, 71 percent of students mostly or totally agreed with the statement "this class meets my learning needs", while 20 percent of students said this statement was only somewhat true. Although student response on this particular survey question was positive, the faculty felt that since the principle addresses the learning needs of each student, that 71% was an inadequate response.

There are, however, outstanding examples of the school's practices to meet the learning needs of certain groups

of students. Approximately 44 English Learner students are accommodated through the school's Newcomers' Academy that offers both sheltered courses, collaborative courses, and push-in courses through a well-monitored and very structured program. The IMPACT program meets the distinct needs of students with identified emotional and psychological needs, providing counseling support and a therapeutic environment throughout the day. In both student and parent interviews, it was commented that the strong support for students with any learning concerns/needs including anxiety that is very apparent by all teachers.

The faculty admits that they struggle with tiered intervention strategies to meet the needs of each learner within the regular classroom. There are systems in place, such as Scientific Research Based Intervention (SRBI), the collaborative teaching model with a special education teacher, and support systems outside of the regular education classroom, such as writing conferences, the after school Homework Help program, Math Workshop and Reading Strategies. However, the ability to meet the needs, particularly of non-identified students, on a daily basis in the regular education classroom needs improvement and many teachers request more professional development in this area.

Despite the admitted difficulty in this area, the school has committed to giving teachers adequate time in Professional Learning Teams (PLT) during the school day to discuss among other things student learning issues. The district has committed to the STAR assessment in reading and mathematics at all grade levels and the high school has added PSAT for Grade 9 students as well as Grade 10 and 11. This data should now serve as a solid foundation on which to make decisions about instruction for groups of students and individual student support. During interviews with central office administrators, the focus for PLT's with additional professional development was outlined to (1) increase teacher capacity to respond to student learning needs, (2) increase teacher capacity to improve core instruction, and (3) promote innovative instructional strategies.

There are examples at FWHS that confirm that students are active learners who have the opportunities to lead their own learning. Evidence from the faculty survey affirms this claim, as 72 percent of teachers believe the statement that "I allow students to make choices about their learning" is totally or mostly true. From the student survey, 86 percent of students think the statement "my teacher allows student choices about my learning" is at least somewhat true. Also, 49 percent of students believe the statement "in this class, I can suggest ideas about how my teacher can assess what we have learned" is mostly or totally true.

Teachers shared that students are given the chance to lead their own learning in examples of assessments that include a creative writing project in which they can interpret the text in a way that demonstrates personal interests beyond writing. There are science research choices and presentation options included in many courses, as well. Interviews with students revealed that in a social studies class each marking period students were allowed to choose their own project and design a presentation for the class based on a particular time period. Another student described an ongoing creative writing assignment that was based on photographs that the students would take outside during different times of the year.

Active learning strategies include student discourse and reflection on learning. One of the most unique programs in the school is the Achievement Gap Task Force now known as Voices for Equity made up of students and teachers. The group's mission is to make sure that all students are given equal access to opportunities and any gaps that are apparent in academic achievement are addressed.

The district curricula include tasks that encourage students to engage in inquiry as well as problem-solving and higher order thinking skills. For example, one English assessment provides students the opportunity to write an editorial that proposes some change or improvement to a contemporary issue in American culture to promote a more "utopian" society. Additionally, in social studies, performance based assessments vary from activities simulating the flow of trade along the Silk Road to researching a current human rights issue in the world. In business courses, students lead a project called "Be an Entrepreneur" in which they design an original business concept and conduct real-time market research to explore the concept's viability in the marketplace. Students in the business program can also participate in an internship program partnering with a business or profession that may be of interest to the student.

In interviews with central office administrators, the superintendent of schools articulated her support for an innovative learning focus in the school and the district. Future directions for the school were shared and include

hybrid learning models with the advent of 1-to-1 technology, student voice and student choice throughout curricular assessments, and flexible seat time given the 24/7 access to technology.

Students have access to learning experiences that are cognitively challenging as approximately 24 percent of the student body select one or more of the 22 Advanced Placement (AP) courses currently offered and/or the eight Early College Experience (ECE) courses available through the University of Connecticut. Students are experiencing a high rate of success in these courses as evidenced in the 2017 administration of the Advanced Placement exams in which 339 FWHS students took a total of 683 exams and 565 of the students scored a "3" or higher. Students acknowledge and accept the level of challenge in these courses. Eighty-eight percent of students agree that "the school sets high standards for academic performance" is mostly or totally true and 72 percent of students express that "their courses are challenging". Teachers interviewed speak to the high level of interest in the AP courses, so much so that they have raised a recent concern that several of the English and social studies AP courses have classes sizes of 27-28, not considered ideal for AP courses.

Learners at FWHS demonstrate their learning through a variety of assessment strategies that inform classroom instruction, many of which are suggested in the school's written curriculum. The use of common assessments that serve to ensure consistent and equitable learning opportunities across grades and courses vary by department. In some content areas, such as math, social studies, science, and world language, common final exams are implemented. There are also final exams that are common between Fairfield Warde High School and the sister school, Fairfield Ludlowe High School. Math, reading, and English (9-10) departments have implemented STAR Testing, in order to provide data for the classroom teacher. All students in grades 9-11 now take the PSAT's in school in October, providing a source of information for classroom instruction as students prepare for the SAT during the junior year.

In addition to standardized common assessments, there are assessments that promote deep understanding, analysis, synthesis, and creativity. Students described assessments that include assuming the role of successful and unsuccessful presidential candidates and playing the role for a period of time in the classroom. A project in environmental science includes making a stop and play motion movie based on a topic of choice by the students. Students have reenacted law cases and taken sides on the historical Trail of Tears. Students also shared the opportunity to choose books to be read and the freedom to create unique ways to present the book to the rest of the class including the writing of children's versions or video presentations. Multiple students talked about the freedom offered in classroom projects that allow for creative ways to interpret or analyze particular novels read in class.

In the school's self-reflection it is suggested that teachers need to improve in the area of providing specific and measurable criteria for success to learners prior to the completion of classroom assessments. The self-reflection indicates that extensive curriculum content limits the time frame necessary for baseline testing. As a result, the faculty does not always use student baseline knowledge to adjust curriculum content. Some departments, such as math and social studies, provide baseline/pre-tests to determine and adjust the implementation of the curriculum. But most of the departments do not effectively outline the unit-specific learning goals to be assessed prior to each unit of study. As a curious contrast to that observation, 81 percent of students indicate that it is totally true or mostly true that "at the beginning of each unit of study, my teacher tells us what we will be expected to learn."

Students at FWHS are given multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning, receive corrective feedback, and use this feedback in meaningful ways to support their learning. The school's self-reflection points to multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning through constructive feedback. Most disciplines offer opportunities to revise writing and retake tests to allow students to support their learning. The most prominent example of a formalized revision process in the school is the English department whose staff meet with students in writing conferences throughout the year. English teachers are given a reduced schedule as the school places a high level of commitment on the conferences, with the expectation that students will have at least three separate writing conferences. In student interviews, some students were quick to highlight the importance of the conferences to have the opportunity to rewrite and resubmit work after teacher review thus improving their writing assessment. Other students spoke to the value of the conference as they prepared college essays. Teacher interviews indicated that some students who enjoy writing bring in their outside work for advice from the teachers. While the expectation includes at least three writing conferences for every student in the school, in interviews, students

concluded that not all students fully participate, perhaps indicating an area to be addressed by the school given the potential strength of the program for all levels of students.

In the art and the technology departments, teachers assign long-term projects and consistently provide feedback and allow opportunities for peer feedback. The family and consumer sciences department has students plan and present a fashion show. The physical education department has shifted focus to wellness and fitness for life. In activities throughout PE courses, students set ambitious goals for themselves encouraging a long-term commitment to fitness. This is evident in the curricular documents for PE that include the statement, students will incorporate fitness and wellness concepts to achieve and maintain a health enhancing level of physical fitness.

As a result of the recent acquisition of 1-to-1 technology (Chromebooks), students have opportunities to use technology across all curricular areas to support, enhance, and demonstrate their learning. During visits to classrooms, the learning commons, and various areas throughout the building, Chromebook usage was very apparent considering the recent deployment of the devices. Classroom visits confirmed that many teachers are already comfortable integrating Chromebooks into classroom instructional practices. World language classes, reading classes, and math classes that were observed confirmed the support that Chromebooks bring to instruction. Google Classroom, with its sharing component, allows for comments and questions between teachers and students and there are a number of applications already being used effectively throughout the school. Both teachers and administrators speak to the value of professional development that focuses on Chromebooks as instructional enhancements. Teachers spoke specifically to the benefit from PD in which they hope to have more opportunities available to learn from each other.

There is a vast array of technology available to students and teachers throughout the building. Computer labs or dedicated classroom labs are readily available including a new technology room with Chromecast screens, a 3-D printer, and flexible furniture for student collaboration. With the change of the Library Media Center to the Learning Commons, students can work in groups on projects that are technology-based. There is a commitment to technology providing authentic learning experiences to students including the graphics lab and television studio that produces the weekly Warde TV.

As well, the school has made a strong commitment to policies and procedures to help learners use technology in informed, effective, and ethical ways. The promotion of ethical use can be found in the Student-Parent Handbook that addresses the school's Academic Integrity Policy and the Computer Network Code of Conduct. Homeroom and advisory activities have been used to address technology expectations when misuse issues are apparent.

Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- classroom observations
- community members
- department leaders
- facility tour
- NEASC survey
- parents
- school leadership
- self-reflection
- students
- teachers

Standard 3 - Professional Practices

Narrative

Fairfield Warde High School actively engages stakeholders in the development and implementation of the Fairfield Warde High School Improvement Plan. The school improvement plan, aligned with the Fairfield Public Schools District Improvement Plan, reflects the schools core values, beliefs about learning, and ultimately will reflect the commitment to instilling in students the transferable skills of the vision of the graduate. The most recent version of the plan, based on the district's theory of action, addresses the commitment to a rigorous, comprehensive instructional program and high quality instruction; common assessments aligned to curriculum; instructional strategies appropriate for teaching in the block schedule; a positive school climate; and the improvement of intervention efforts to ensure success for all students. The school's self-reflection credits climate surveys, student data, current research, and the perspectives of the school community to guide the design, revision, and implementation of the school improvement plan.

The survey indicates that 87 percent of the faculty are at least somewhat familiar with the school's improvement plan. The survey also indicates that 68 percent of the faculty at least somewhat feel as though their voices are heard in regard to the development of the school improvement plan. The district leadership team addressed one of the highlights of the school improvement plan as improving intervention efforts. Their opinion concurs with current faculty input that the school overall is prioritizing the analysis of teaching skills and the ability to respond to student learning needs. The school improvement plan also confirms the issue of a supportive learning culture: "individual teacher goals will be focused on increasing student achievement of all classroom learners in department-identified curriculum standards as measured by department-common/identical assessments."

FWHS educators engage in ongoing reflection, formal and informal collaboration, and professional development to improve student learning and well-being. The faculty survey indicates that 66 percent of faculty collaborate and discuss what helps students learn the best at least one to two times a week. Informal examples include discussions on how to incorporate technology into curriculum using the 1-to-1 Chromebooks and the home economics department collaborates with the science department to create cross-curricular lessons and activities. More formally, educators engage in Professional Learning Teams (PLT) and department meetings with the purpose of reviewing student achievement and curriculum, reviewing student work, collaborating and reflecting on teaching. The new block schedule creates the opportunity for meaningful PLT time and in various interviews it was clear that this time was recognized as a strong addition to support student learning. Currently, 70 percent of teachers feel that it is mostly true or totally true that they discuss how to improve instruction. With the formalized PLT time, a relatively new concept, it is the hope and expectation of the school community that the collaboration thus afforded will be a strong factor in promoting the discussion of instructional improvement among all faculty to benefit the achievement of students as well as addressing student concerns.

The staff at FWHS participate in a coordinated schedule of district level and building level teacher-led professional development and workshops. The faculty survey indicates that 49 percent of staff feel that they have some influence in determining the content of in-service professional development days. Teachers at FWHS express strongly that student achievement would benefit from teachers having more ownership of their professional development. Of particular interest is building initiated in-house professional development. Teachers do realize that there are district initiatives and mandated training that must be included in district determined professional development, but the statement, "Please allow us to teach each other," represents the impassioned feeling of those teachers interviewed.

However, teachers did express that improving their craft is not just supported, it is ardently encouraged by administration. Teachers appreciate their access to professional development programming and workshops offered outside of the district along with tuition reimbursement that is a cornerstone of this practice. The school and the district earnestly seek to promote and maintain best practices by encouraging attendance at conferences and conventions outside of the district, the pursuit of additional graduate and sixth year degrees, and attendance at training including STEM programs. Teachers who wish to take on additional leadership responsibilities and roles are encouraged to do so. The faculty survey indicates that 86 percent of faculty at least somewhat feel that

they are given important leadership opportunities.

The teacher evaluation process in the Fairfield Public Schools, allows for frequent feedback between administrator and teachers in an effective and timely manner through the use of the PROTRAXX online system starting with initial proposals, number of goals related to whole school learning practice, as well as communication with parents. This feedback is both through online communication as well as face-to-face interactions with school administrators. Educators meet with their administrators at least three times per year to discuss goals related to student achievement and professional development in order to engage in reflection of student learning and well-being.

FWHS educators examine evidence of student learning and well-being to improve curriculum, instruction, assessment practices, and programs and services. To assess student learning, FWHS uses the STAR reading and math standardized assessments along with PSAT/SAT scores, and other common assessments, many indicated in the school's curricula. The school has also designated measures to identify inequities in student learning according to the Academic Expectations Rubric. The six indicators focus on the student's ability to demonstrate critical and creative thinking to effectively evaluate evidence and construct solutions. The expectations also focus on student's ability to communicate information clearly and effectively in a variety of contexts and work collaboratively to solve a problem. Students are able to reference and explain the skills that are assessed in the Academic Expectations Rubric; however, students were not necessarily clear on how these indicators are being measured in the classroom.

The examination of evidence does allow for students who struggle in math class, based on the STAR scores and classroom performance indicated by both academic ability and the academic expectations, to have access to the Math Workshop course as an intervention. There is also a reading strategies course for students who struggle in that area. English teachers at FWHS are responsible for three, individual writing conferences with students. During these conferences students reflect on their writing, focus on developing writing skills, and work one-on-one with the teacher. Students expressed that they feel encouraged to ask teachers and faculty members for instructional support and confirmed that teachers are very willing to meet with them before and after school and during their planning time to provide them with extra support on a topic or assignment. In addition, students pointed out that teachers also visit the Learning Commons during planning periods in an effort to avail themselves to students who need instructional assistance.

To assess student well-being, FWHS administers a school climate survey to all students, parents, and faculty that administration takes into account when developing school-wide goals and initiatives. The FWHS counseling staff administers the Behavior and Emotional Screening System (BESS) survey twice a year, to assess student emotional well-being. Each house staff comprised of the housemaster, dean, and counseling staff, meets weekly to discuss student needs and teacher concerns. Counselors monitor student progress to assess well-being and provide Tier I supports, as well as to administer career interest profiling screenings, and meet with students during their junior year to guide planning on post secondary options.

At FWHS, there are collaborative structures and processes in place to support the coordination and implementation of curriculum. Currently, the PLTs and department meetings have the potential to serve as the collaborative structure and process to foster coordination. The school's self-reflection reveals that the interdisciplinary, or horizontal collaborative structures and processes to support the coordination among departments are more informal and less structured at Fairfield Warde because of scheduling and the logistics of finding time to meet to plan. When teachers or the housemasters realize that opportunities among courses exist for collaboration, the collaboration does occur, but it is incidental. The general feeling expressed in the self-reflection and in teacher interviews is that much more potential exists for collaboration than is currently implemented.

While the house system could potentially create an opportunity for collaboration among teachers and departments, as well as interdisciplinary opportunities as originally designed, the three houses are currently grouped by department. The house system currently serves as a strong social and supportive aspect of the school culture more than serving an academic, curricular structure. Adjusting the model to suit academic needs may be very challenging as the current house structure is entrenched in the culture of the school and serves as a home to students, a center of pride to many, and a clear sense of identity to large groups of students. Combining

the two goals of the house system currently presents a challenge.

FWHS uses school-wide organizational practices that are designed to meet the learning needs of all students. The school provides access to challenging academic experiences for all learner needs and interests. The FWHS Program of Studies outlines the vast number of courses to which students have access. This selection includes 22 Advanced Placement (AP) courses, multiple electives within core content areas, as well as a variety of electives in art, business, family and consumer science, music, technology education, theater arts, and video/news production. While the school has made advances in technology offering such courses as graphic communication technology and engineering design/robotics, the school has also managed to offer wood construction technology, wood manufacturing, and home & auto care and maintenance.

Advanced Placement (AP) courses have open enrollment encouraging all students to challenge themselves and participate in these upper level courses. Students and parents did indicate that there can be scheduling conflicts preventing students from taking multiple AP courses and other desired courses; however, with an 8-period day, 22 AP courses, and an array of other courses, conflicts are unavoidable. Each year, as students participate in the course selection process it does allow for individual conversations between students, their teachers and school counselors regarding the following year's course load and ways that the student can continue to challenge him or herself.

According to the survey, 97 percent of students agree with the statement "this school sets high standards for academic performance" is somewhat true, mostly true, or totally true. Students communicated that there is a good balance between the level of expectation of them in the classroom and the support they receive from teachers. In addition, students voice appreciation for the way they are challenged and the approach taken by teachers in the classroom. The student survey supports this with 71 percent of students believing that "my teacher emphasizes problem-solving" is mostly true or totally true. The teacher survey also concurs. Eight-seven percent of teachers indicate that "I emphasize problem-solving" and 85 percent support that "I emphasize teaching higher-order thinking, not just learning facts".

There are many courses throughout the curriculum that are populated with learners reflecting the diversity of the student body. Ninety-two percent of teachers responded that the classes that they teach are at least somewhat as diverse as the school's student body. And, 93 percent of teachers also at least somewhat agreed that their classes include students from all ability levels. There is somewhat of a discrepancy between the actual enrollment of learners reflecting the diversity of the student body in honors and AP level courses and the student perception of that enrollment in the school survey. The school's self-reflection includes reference to the fact that honors level and AP courses are not populated with as many diverse learners as the perception ascertains; however, there are courses that represent the diversity apparent throughout the school. The school is working to alleviate an unequal balance of students by maintaining open enrollment of AP courses and offering honors level credit in certain elective courses thus providing an incentive for all students to enroll in these courses. In addition, Fairfield Warde Voice of Equity has been working on identifying ways to increase diversity in upper level courses.

In order to ensure that all learners have access to the curricula, FWHS provides a wide range of services through special education such as co-teaching, small group instruction, and one-on-one instruction. There is also a program for the most complex learners (Complex Learner Cohort) that provides academic and behavioral instruction to students with autism and students with developmental needs. FWHS also offers an array of support services by designated counseling center staff, which is comprised of two clinical social workers, two certified school psychologists, and a licensed substance abuse counselor. The Counseling Center staff offer both individual and group counseling for all students who are in need of emotional support services. All staff in the Counseling Center provide assessment and evaluations for students referred for special education and 504 accommodations. Other services provided by the counseling staff include consultation for classroom instruction and referrals to private providers and community-based agencies. Additionally, FWHS offers programming for students who need intensive behavioral and emotional support.

The Learning Commons, the former school library, is a dedicated space that is uniquely designed to meet the learning needs of all students. The commons is an inclusive learning environment accessible to students of all abilities to work alone or together. It is a true "commons" for the school in the sense that it is a gathering place in which students reflective of all learning styles clearly feel very comfortable and utilize the many types of

innovative resources. The area includes multiple flexible classrooms for teachers to utilize as well as a "makerspace" and a recording studio. Multiple forms of technology are available for students to access. There is also an Academic Center where students can go for organizational and learning support, as well as a Math Center where students can work with a math teacher for extra help.

The school community views the potential of the advisory program to help foster meaningful relationships and enhance student connectedness to the core values of the school and to the faculty and staff. Currently the advisory program is viewed by students as a strong driver for inclusivity as the entire school is expected to participate in planned activities centering on study skills, anti-bullying efforts, empathy, and other important topics.

Fairfield Warde also believes student/staff involvement in clubs embedded during the school day helps to create and foster a positive and inclusive school community. Many of the clubs bolster a strong and supportive school culture. Students also have direct input into improvement efforts by participating in the school council and house councils, which include students, teachers, and school leadership. The student forum also provides a voice for student input into improvement. The survey supports the effectiveness of these efforts in that 82% of students at least somewhat believe they have a voice in improving the school.

FWHS faculty have successfully develop productive student, family, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support learning. All teachers, in all departments, use Infinite Campus to regularly update families on student grades and attendance. The expectation of teachers as part of their annual teacher evaluation is to focus on parent communication as 10 percent of their annual rating.

Parents indicated that teacher communication has been "getting better and better." Parents also agreed that if they emailed a teacher they were likely to hear back on the same day often within a few hours. Parents also spoke to their connections at the school and the encouragement of them to be involved. Highlighted were the Athletic Parents' Association and the Music Parents' Association, both of which play an integral role with various activities involving respective teachers and students. The partnership with the PTA enables monthly programming for parents such as instruction on Naviance, support for the college application process, information sessions on scholarships, and an annual program addressing underage drinking.

There are multiple opportunities for community, business, and higher education partnerships as well. The business department Internship & Career Exploration course enables students to engage in a meaningful internship exploring a career interest or service opportunity with a local business or agency. Interviews indicated that recent internships included the town hall, local courts, and radio stations. The Junior Achievement program encourages students to launch their own start-up business. The science department organizes several community field trips throughout the year, including one to the Audubon Society (SOAR program) and one to Riverlab, where students learn how to act as guides for younger students. School resource and canine officers have come into school to speak to forensics classes and guest speakers from Boehringer-Ingelheim have presented to the AP biology class. The science department plans to include a dual enrollment program with the University of Bridgeport in the future. The music department brings in professional musicians and clinicians annually, including, but not limited to professors from local universities. Select students perform in the region music ensembles that hire conductors from all over the country. Music department faculty periodically bring ensembles to various festivals to perform and gain feedback from expert adjudicators. Many of the performing groups have relationships with various community organizations which result in performance opportunities throughout the town. The English department takes many field trips throughout the year, such as the Call of the Wild overnight trip while the junior American Literature classes regularly visit Salem, Massachusetts and Walden Pond. There have been Skype sessions with various authors related to their curricular study. In addition, the math department occasionally brings in guest speakers related to specific curriculum. Multiple departments participate in University of Connecticut's ECE (Early College Experience) program through which high school students can apply for UCONN credit after successfully completing applicable courses. Other notable events and connections to the community at-large include the town-wide art show, which displays K-12 student work at the Pequot Library and the display of student work at the town's train stations. In addition, the world language department has been very active with its international trips. In recent school years there have been student trips from FWHS to Canada, China, Spain, France, and Italy.

Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- classroom observations
- department leaders
- facility tour
- NEASC survey
- parents
- school leadership
- self-reflection
- students
- teachers

Standard 4 - Learning Support

Narrative

There are multiple strategies in place to ensure that Fairfield Warde faculty and staff meet students' needs in order to promote academic, social, and emotional success. According to the self-reflection report, along with teacher interviews, pupil services staff interviews, and administrator interviews, there are multiple intervention strategies to support students' social and emotional well-being. There is a fully staffed school counseling department comprised of 9 school counselors and a counseling center staffed by 2.5 school psychologists, two social workers, and one student assistance counselor. The counseling department supports students by offering individual and group counseling, including Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) groups. Students with social and emotional concerns can be referred for counseling in multiple ways: students can self-refer, they may be referred through their house staffing teams where a counseling center referral form is completed, or teachers or parents can make referrals. Fairfield Warde uses a universal screening tool, the Behavioral and Emotional Screening System (BESS), to identify students with elevated levels of depression and/or anxiety, along with other concerns. Students who are elevated are seen by counselors either individually or in a group, and a determination is made if it is necessary to administer the follow-up rating scale (BASC).

According to FWHS staff, the Individualized Motivation to Promote and Achieve Creative Transformation (IMPACT) Program, which recently replaced the Effective School Solutions (ESS) program also provides significant supports for students with social and emotional needs. This program is staffed by two social workers and two special education teachers. It consists of approximately 1.3 percent of the FWHS population.

Students interviewed articulated specific staff members who they felt they could access to find the support they need from various sources throughout the building for academic, social, and emotional support. Even in informal, candid questioning of students, every one offered that there was at least one adult who they could go to for a variety of reasons if they needed help. In the survey, 70 percent of students reported that it was mostly or totally true that "at this school, adults do something when someone needs help". In addition, in response to the student survey question "I know who to go to in this school if I need social or emotional help" 75 percent of students reported that this was mostly true or totally true. Furthermore, 80 percent of students surveyed confirmed that it was mostly true or totally true that they know who to go to if they need academic help.

Fairfield Warde High School is in the process of developing systems to ensure that all students receive appropriate intervention strategies to support their academic, social, and emotional success. It was evident in interviews with central office administrators, building level administrators, and faculty, that while there is a Scientifically Research Based Intervention system in place, FWHS is currently restructuring to make it more effective. The SRBI committee consists of a reading specialist, math specialist, house dean, housemaster, director of pupil services, school counselor, school psychologist, and a special education teacher. The committee meets weekly and has been working with an outside consultant. One goal of the current Fairfield Warde school improvement plan outlines the process needed to develop and implement a revised SRBI system in order to positively impact student achievement and solidify a process to identify and refer students who need additional academic assistance. Teachers, administrators, and district leadership all concurred that the first step in this goal was to build teacher capacity in Tier I core instruction. Furthermore, teachers and administrators expressed a desire to learn ways to analyze student work and assessments on a regular basis in order to properly inform Tier I instruction. Moreover, they believe further work must be done to develop a system for identifying and placing students in Tier II and Tier III interventions. Included as part of this plan, FWHS administrators and teachers have spoken to the expectation of developing systems for progress monitoring and exit criteria. It is evident that the school team believes the foundation for these structures can be built on the current Professional Learning Team (PLT) model. Using the PLT process, the school also plans to initiate an examination of student work protocols to further enhance the SRBI process.

FWHS does have multiple intervention strategies designed to support students in the areas of reading, mathematics, and special education as well as for those students who are English Learners (EL). The academic intervention strategies include after-school homework support, reading strategies classes, math workshop classes, math and academic centers, individualized English writing conferences, and extra help offered by teachers outside of class time. When these interventions are not successful, students can be formally referred to

the SRBI team. There is also an alternative high school program, the Walter Fitzgerald Campus. This smaller setting provides students a more individualized learning environment where educational and social emotional needs are supported through small class size and daily progress monitoring. Both students and parents elaborated on the belief that the English writing conferences play a significant role in not only developing strong teacher-student relationships, but also are a powerful and effective tool to help students grow in his/her writing ability. It was also noted that FWHS provides a robust EL program that supports students with a continuum of services in sheltered, and collaborative classes with two TESOL certified EL teachers. This program has provided obvious and powerful support in helping students transition to regular courses at FWHS.

Based on student, parent, and staff interviews, along with school survey data and general observations, students receive counseling services that meet their personal, social, emotional, academic, career, and counseling needs from adequate, certified/licensed personnel. One positive example of this is illustrated by the student to school counselor ratio of 171:1. FWHS counselors address course selection and post secondary planning. School social workers assist with family dynamics and collaborating with community providers. School psychologists provide psycho-educational testing, and the student assistance counselor specializes in supporting students struggling with drug and/or alcohol issues.

The school counseling department uses a developmental guidance program according to grade level. While there is not a formal development guidance course or built-in schedule according to counselors, activities as part of the program for each grade level are scheduled as push-in times or in groups. These sessions support post-secondary school planning, including the implementation of career and personality assessments which support students in gathering information about their individual strengths, blind-spots, and interests. In addition to the developmental guidance program, counselors reported that they meet with each student at least three times per school year. While the majority of students and parents spoke very highly of their counselors and the access that they have to them, there was a noted discrepancy as the student survey data indicates that 29.6 percent of students state "they never meet with their school counselor". During the interview process, several students also stated that they do not see their counselor. Balancing this impression, the student survey promotes a high percentage of students, 83 percent, who responded that it was mostly true or totally true that "a counselor is available at this school when I need help". That percentage jumps to 95 percent when including those who feel the statement is at least somewhat true. The faculty survey reports that 80 percent of faculty believe it is mostly true or totally true that Fairfield Warde counseling services meet students' academic needs.

The College and Career Center (CCC) at Fairfield Warde brings in presenters, holds information sessions, and also provides one-on-one support for students. Targeted assistance for college admissions is available to students and assistance with college essays and applications is part of the services of the center. The counselors of the CCC distribute information to students through various means including Infinite campus, Google Classroom, PTA Blasts, and Naviance. Several students highlighted the welcoming atmosphere within the CCC. Students referred to the center as very helpful and one student emphatically stated that the center was a "lifesaver!" Another student stated that she used the CCC not only for college and career research, but also a quiet place to study. Parents supported the center in the survey as 86 percent of parents felt that it was somewhat true, mostly true, or totally true that "at this school, the counseling services meet my child's college-related needs". For students who choose an alternative plan to college, school counselors discuss post-secondary settings including trade schools, gap years, employment, military and transition plans for students receiving special education services. For students needing additional support from Fairfield Public Schools, the Community Partnership Program is discussed.

All students take the PSAT at FWHS in grades 9, 10, and 11, unless otherwise advised. School counselors meet with students once PSAT scores are released in order to help them access their scores through a College Board account, and establish and link to a Khan Academy account, through which students can access academic support resources as well as individualized SAT preparation support. To further support college planning, school counselors provide a Post High School Planning "kickoff" presentation in junior year to review all relevant information. Parents are invited to attend workshops and presentations offered by the school counselors, in addition to individual meetings with each junior student and school counselor. The parent survey supports that 70 percent of parents believe that "at this school, the counseling services meet my child's college-related needs". Roughly the same percentage felt that the counseling services meet my child's career needs

Students in need of more intensive counseling services, beyond general counseling with their school counselors, are identified via PPT meetings, 504 meetings, SRBI in its current form, parent referrals, teacher referrals, and

students seeking their own support. Annually, the counseling center staff administer the BESS (Behavior and Emotional Screening System) to all students. This measure provides data on students in need of more intensive services and students are referred to the counseling center school social worker, school psychologist, or student assistant counselor as appropriate. If a family wishes to pursue support services within the community, counseling personnel are able to provide names of providers or community centers for therapy, medication management, social services, and other supports. Eighty-nine percent of parents surveyed felt that the statement that "the counseling services meet my child's social and emotional needs" was somewhat true, mostly true, or totally true. Interviews with parents aligned with the survey data.

Based on information gathered during interviews and also noted in the school's self-reflection report, students at FWHS receive highly adequate health services that ensure their physical and emotional well-being. The school's health services are provided by two full-time registered nurses. Student records, including health and immunization records are maintained in a confidential and secure manner consistent with federal and state law. Health and immunization records are stored in locked file cabinets in the nurse's office. Health and immunization records are also stored in Infinite Campus, where faculty are able to identify students with health concerns on their class roster. Substitute teachers are provided with vital information regarding classroom modifications, health alerts, and emergency response plans.

The school's health services provide representative health services and direct intervention services, appropriate referrals, mandated services, emergency response mechanisms and ongoing student health assessments. FWHS complies with all federal and state directives for students grades 9-12. Preventative health and direct intervention services consist of available on-demand mental and physical health services provided during the school day. Ongoing student health assessments are performed on all new FWHS students. Scoliosis, hearing, and vision testing is conducted for all students as well as health assessments for athletes. Sports fitness qualification evaluation records are maintained in cooperation with local medical professionals and FWHS trainers. Ongoing wellness and health education needs are provided throughout the school year. Although the present caseload of six hundred students per nurse meets national standards, it occasionally slows delivery of services. From student survey results, 81 percent of students reported that it is mostly true or totally true that "the nurse is available when they need help". As well, 75 percent of parents responded on the parent survey that it is mostly true or totally true that "health staff support their child's social and emotional well-being". Additionally, 80 percent of parents render favorably that "the health staff effectively support their child's physical well-being".

The school's Emergency Response Team involves nursing, administrative, teacher, and security personnel. Response time and treatment delivery is under 5 minutes. The team is trained in the use of two automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) that are strategically placed in the building for rapid availability. There are clear guidelines delineated on the Fairfield Public Schools website for protocols in case of the deployment of the AED and/or the Emergency Response Team.

The health services personnel take an active role in promoting the health and well-being of students. In addition, information is provided to the community about support services that are available. A highlight from interviews with the school nurse demonstrated how the staff connects families with financial need to available resources including free physicals, necessary immunizations, and dental services.

All students have access to library/information services that strongly support learning. Confirmed during student and staff interviews as well as survey data, the school's learning commons is a hub of the school for studying, exploration, and unique courses. The space is amply suited to be responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning, collaboration among students, and opportunities for authentic learning. According to the school's self-reflection, the learning commons is well staffed with 2.5 certified library media specialists, a full-time para-professional, a part-time secretary, and an after-school facilitator of programming. Library media staff are responsible for purchasing the many resources related to independent reading, teaching research strategies, as well as presentation of curriculum (databases, video listing, online book search, Overdrive). The faculty encourages the use of these resources and include the teaching of research strategies in many classes using a board of education approved library media department curriculum. In the student survey, 73 percent of students responded that it was mostly true or totally true that they use the library/information services to support their learning. According to the library media staff, funding continues to grow each year, demonstrating the school's commitment to support teaching and learning in this redesigned area. The learning commons staff also implements the media curricula, focusing on video production and broadcast journalism.

Content specific instruction supported through the learning commons includes the English department book talks and the school's freshman orientation. In the faculty survey, 69 percent of faculty at Fairfield Warde High School stated that the learning commons services are integrated into the curriculum most or all of the time. A tour of the facility revealed that an ample profusion of materials are offered through the learning commons, including books (hard copies and e-books), databases, computers, movies, and a comprehensive website. All of these resources can be used during the normal operating hours of Monday – Friday from 7:30 AM until 4:00 PM and on Fridays from 7:30 AM until 3:30 PM, with a twenty-four hour virtual presence. Underclassman can access the learning commons during study hall with a pass; upperclassman can access it during free periods. All students have access during lunch. Eighty-five percent of students feel it is mostly true or totally true that they can use the learning commons when they want most or all of the time. The only concern expressed by students was that it is often difficult to find a space to study quietly in the learning commons because in most cases, all spaces are filled quickly by students and or staff. Tours of the space at various times of the day revealed an active and lively space with students working together or alone. The space resembles a collegiate student union or the type of multi purpose area found on college campuses. The stated goal is to monitor student needs to make sure the space remains responsive to the students and the faculty.

One of the highlights for the learning commons is evident in the 2017 redesign of the physical space, which gave Fairfield Warde a recording studio for students, study rooms, a flexible classroom that can be reconfigured to suit a variety of instructional designs, a creative classroom where classes can use materials to create learning experiences beyond a traditional classroom, a quiet reading area, a "makerspace" station with a variety of challenges throughout the year, various computer stations both for sitting and standing work, as well as a centralized "pop-up" classroom with a projector. In addition to being staffed by teachers who are available for student help, the membership of the National Honor Society has also utilizes space within the learning commons, within the Math and Academic Centers, to tutor other students. There is also a teacher workroom with computers and various professional resources. The school's self-reflection noted that teachers have been newly assigned to staff the study area, which is allowing more faculty members to assist in the cultural development of the learning commons environment. Tours through the learning common witnessed the assigned teacher moving from table to table interacting with the students and contributing to the productive but relaxed feeling in the space.

Fairfield Warde has a significant number of support and services in place provided by an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel to meet the needs of English Learners (EL), students with special needs, and students with 504 plans. There are currently 13.7 special education teachers, 2.5 speech and language pathologists, one part-time occupational therapist, 13 paraprofessionals, .2 physical therapist, four educational trainers, a transition specialist, three remedial reading and remedial language arts teachers, two social workers, one student assistance counselor, 2.5 school psychologists, and two EL teachers. On average, the student to special education teacher ratio is 16:1, and the Complex Learner Cohort (CLC) is 5:1. For EL teachers, the student to teacher ratio is approximately 25:1.

To better meet the needs of EL students, a Newcomer Academy was established during the 2018-2019 school year. As a result, Level 1 and 2 English learners from Fairfield Warde and its sister school, Fairfield Ludlowe attend the program with the intention of concentrating resources into a single, magnet-style school program rather than having the students spread across the two schools. This change has allowed students to receive a

more appropriate number of service hours and level of support commensurate with their language and academic skill level. This addition of this program has resulted in students receiving consistent coursework in both sheltered and collaborative classes in the core subject areas (English, math, science and social studies). One area for growth recommended by teachers during interviews centered around a need for more updated resources (textbooks and other materials) given the number and need of the student population.

In terms of special education support for students with emotional needs, FWHS recently discontinued programming provided by the Effective School Solutions (ESS), a private agency. With the implementation of a new in-house program called IMPACT, additional support personnel has been hired and more of an emphasis has been placed on providing academic as well as executive functioning supports. Interviews with the team involved in IMPACT revealed a passion to support the critical needs of this student population.

Lastly, school counselors, social workers, and psychologists have been trained and are implementing Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). The implementation of DBT is used to best support students' behavioral and social/emotional needs. Special education teachers and speech pathologists are also participating in professional development to understand basic DBT strategies that can be utilized with all students. DBT training will be provided for faculty and will be concentrated on students identified for the IMPACT program.

Inclusive learning is provided through both collaborative and push-in instructional models to support students' learning needs. Speech and language pathologists, as well as other related services providers, such as occupational therapists, push-in to academic classes to support language and communication needs in whole group settings. In addition, English learners are provided with access to an academic support in-class. Teachers indicated during interviews that more professional development could be provided to staff to help with inclusive learning strategies within the content area classrooms to better support EL students.

In addition to the services discussed above, students indicated there are clubs and extra-curricular activities that specifically provide access to inclusive socialization and extra curricular activities for students. For example, La Vida Latina, Arabic Club, and Brazilian Club offer avenues for students to express and navigate their experiences through cultural lenses. In addition, the Best Buddies Club, Unified Sports, interscholastic sports, and intramural athletics are a source of pride for the school and provide equal access to sports and socialization opportunities and are inclusive of students of all abilities. Finally, the district-wide special education director indicated that the district recently completed an independent evaluation of special education services to determine overall progress and to compare the Fairfield program with other towns in both District Reference Groups (DRG) A and B.

Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- classroom observations
- department leaders
- facility tour
- NEASC survey
- parents
- school leadership
- self-reflection
- students
- teacher interview
- teachers

Standard 5 - Learning Resources

Narrative

The school district and community of Fairfield have provided a high school building and facilities in Fairfield Warde High School that support the delivery of high quality curriculum, programs, and services. After an extensive tour, there is no question that the building and facilities ensure a safe, secure, and healthy environment. The school's main building is built on a "house model" that subdivides what would be a large and impersonal institutional building into three separate "houses" built around open courtyards and joined by breezeways. The footprint of the building covers just under seven acres and is surrounded by an additional 33 acres of playing and practice fields, including eight tennis courts and a new artificial turf field. Off the main cafeteria, a large, central courtyard accommodates up to 2150 people and a proud tradition of the school is utilizing that area to accommodate the graduating students, teachers, and family members at the annual commencement.

The school has an auditorium, a dedicated music wing with separate rehearsal facilities for band, orchestra, and chorus, multiple music practice rooms, a "black box" theater, a learning commons with multiple classrooms and spaces within including a television studio, multiple gymnasiums, and a technology education wing housing the school's childhood learning lab which includes an observation lab, culinary lab and restaurant, wood and engine shop, and CAD and graphic design rooms. An alternative educational campus, Walter Fitzgerald, is located off-site. Cafeteria services are outsourced to Whitsons, a private food-service company.

The custodial staff at Fairfield Warde High School ensures a positive learning environment within the facilities and grounds. The building is maintained by an 11-person crew of custodial staff, led by a head custodian and a night supervisor. The staff, responsible for the cleanliness of the entire school building, operates on a predetermined cleaning schedule. The entire school and grounds are addressed and tended to on a regular basis. Certain areas are taken care of daily, others weekly, some monthly, or they might be addressed on an as-needed basis. They follow a strict and regimented schedule daily for all high traffic areas. For example, all bathroom facilities are cleaned thoroughly by night staff. The custodial/maintenance staff is also responsible for maintenance and repairs reported through an online program (School Dude). An interview with custodial staff illustrated the care students have for the building and the pride both students and staff have in the building. It is clear that the FWHS students, staff, along with the entire school community, take great ownership and shared responsibility in the overall appearance of their school.

There is a very appropriate method for addressing maintenance issues that may present a safety concern to the school population. As issues arise regarding the safety of the facility, the head custodian is able to report that information out immediately. Using School Dude, the head custodian inputs work orders in a timely fashion to ensure that repairs are made. When putting in a work order, the head custodian selects a priority level, ranging from LOW to EMERGENCY, in order to indicate the urgency of the work to be completed. The work order is sent to the district's maintenance supervisor who assigns the repair/maintenance to a staff member. The priority level first placed when the work order is submitted will often determine the timeliness of its completion. If necessary, the work can be completed by a district contractor or other staff. For example, the district staff include two plumbers, two electricians, four carpenters, one mechanic, and one mason. Another example of the outsourced work include lawn care and snow removal contracts, which are bid on annually.

There is a preponderance of evidence which demonstrates that the school, community and district provide time and financial resources to support instruction, professional growth, and school programs and services. For example, Fairfield Warde High School organizes its school day around a four period alternating day, schedule to accommodate eight, 85 minute periods. The previous eight period daily rotation fragmented teacher and student learning and the longer blocks of time serve the performance-based assessment model. Students spoke highly of the adjusted schedule and parents appreciated their children being able to plan better for homework and assignments knowing that in certain cases they would have two days to complete work with the alternating day schedule.

The newly adjusted schedule brings a 10 percent increase in class time per subject, from 927 to 1019 hours. The schedule now allows for built-in teacher collaboration, one forty minute session every four days, for Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) that have begun with success in many subject areas and are targeted by the school administration and district administration to be a strong vehicle of data analysis. According to the school's self-reflection, this planning time allows for grade-level alignment of the Academic Expectations Rubric in the areas of critical and creative thinking and should ultimately serve to assist groups of teachers and departments in designing appropriate assessments to measure the identified transferable skills of the school's vision of the graduate. Several teachers, parents, and students indicated that the schedule has had a very positive impact on teaching and learning. The new schedule also creates an extended homeroom period of twenty-five minutes once per week on Wednesdays for the advisory and activity programs. Club meetings and advisory rotate weekly allowing at least one club meeting per month. Activity have grown to 1000 students in over 90 clubs, from Anime to Yoga. Students so enjoy the ability to access certain clubs during the school day that they expressed a concern over recent plans to increase advisory time, lessening the access to activities.

In the 2017-2018 school year, Fairfield Public Schools included six early dismissal days and three full days for professional development, doubling the previous time for PD. Teacher-led PD opportunities provide faculty the chance to offer sessions in an "open-choice" model that has improved teacher choice and satisfaction in partnership with fellow educators. This change was implemented in response to a survey about the quality of professional development in which teachers expressed dissatisfaction. As a result 73 percent of faculty rated the statement, "at this school an appropriate amount of time is provided for professional development" as at least somewhat true.

Professional development money is set aside for each school in the district for building use. Additional money is provided in the district budget for curriculum development. Teachers have opportunities for both district sponsored and non-district funded development through these funds. Based on teacher interviews, it was clear that the staff truly appreciate the financial support they receive through tuition reimbursement to grow their practice in very meaningful ways.

The school has identified that special education services have increased with the new schedule. Two types of special education courses (collaborative and push-in model) are now offered depending on the needs of the students and the design of the course. The push-in model allows for flexibility for the special education teacher to join the classroom and provide needed services. The self-reflection credits this format for creating increased contact time between students and special education services. With the two new models, 40 minutes of collaborative planning time between a special education teacher and the content teacher has been provided every four days. It was noted that special education teachers are often pulled out of their assigned classes or collaborative planning to attend PPT meetings. It is hoped that this concern can be addressed in future school improvement plans.

All stakeholders including but not limited to, parents, teachers, administrators, and district leadership, feel that the school, community and district provide adequate and dependable funding for programming and learning opportunities at Fairfield Warde High School. Several examples of this were noted including a newly implemented 1-to-1 program with Chromebooks, a new turf field, several upgrades as part of the redesign of the learning commons, and the increase of staff to support special education programs (including IMPACT) and EL services.

According to the school's self-reflection, in addition to 300 courses in 16 distinct disciplines in the school, the school offers numerous extra-curricular opportunities that support a variety of interests of the student body. Students spoke proudly of the yearly fall play, the spring musical, and the school's winter Carillon concert. Fairfield Warde High School also offers 32 varsity sports, 17 of which have sub-varsity opportunities for participation, another source of pride articulated by the students. Almost 60 percent of the student body participates in these athletic programs. Furthermore, the school offers seven intramural activities and five extra-curricular music groups. Funding for extracurricular athletic programs is adequate to meet the basic needs of the programs, such as transportation, officials, adults supervising games, supplies, and fees. According to the student survey, students overwhelmingly feel there are adequate resources available to provide them with a rich and comprehensive education. For example, 66 percent of students acknowledged that the statement "at this

school, we have enough money and resources for extracurricular activities" was mostly or totally true. The faculty survey is in agreement with 78 percent of the faculty responding that it was at least somewhat true that "we have enough money for co-curricular learning programs (e.g. field trips, after school, and educational events, etc)".

Evidence shows that the school, community, and district have short-term and long-term plans to address the capital and maintenance needs. The short-term capital and maintenance needs are attended to regularly. The day-to-day maintenance plan of the building and facilities is handled by maintenance and custodial staff. This includes daily cleaning of the building and timely repairs made throughout the building. Custodial staff ensures the maintenance of some of the outside grounds but both lawn care and snow removal are completed by outside contractors. Contractors bid annually for the responsibility. In addition to day-to-day responsibilities, when deemed appropriate, some repairs are delayed until periods of time when the building is less occupied, such as the summer.

The capital needs of the district are based on the number of students it currently serves, and the reliable projections of the students it expects to serve in the future. The district uses projected enrollment data to calculate the numbers of full-time educators in the building as well as the dollars allocated to each building for both curricular and co-curricular use. The district has an established three-year technology plan. This plan allocates for existing technology such as purchasing software and subscription services, replacing equipment, and upgrading the infrastructure.

The school district addresses capital improvement needs of FWHS effectively. The district operating budget outlines all the accounts for the maintenance and grounds for all of the schools. The information being proposed comes from the director of operations office where a list of priorities is used in preparation of the annual budget. High priority items are added to the budget and typically include safety, security, the addressing of hazardous materials, curriculum-driven learning needs, and special education. The school's self-reflection indicates that some proposed capital projects have been part of the long-term plan for many years without implementation. There are also capital non-recurring projects that are addressed. These projects are part of short-term bonding program for the town of Fairfield and are comprised of projects that are a one-time purchase, yield 20 years or more before replacement again, or are too large for the district operating budget. The capital requests projects require the town of Fairfield to assign a building committee of town volunteers to oversee these projects as they can be submitted to the State of Connecticut for reimbursement.

Evidence indicates that the school, community, and district have infrastructure and protocols in place to respond to a crisis situation. FWHS has lockdown procedures established and each staff member has a manual for the following situations; lockdown, interior threat, exterior threat, and shelter-in-place. In tours it was clear to see that these instructions are visible throughout the classrooms. Fairfield Warde safety operations planning also maintains procedures for the emergencies that may be chemical, medical, and fire related. The school survey supports the effectiveness of the school's safety planning. One hundred percent of teachers responded that it was somewhat true, mostly true, or totally true that they know what to do if there is a crisis. Students have confidence in the staff of the school according to the survey. Ninety-seven percent of students felt it was somewhat true, mostly true, or totally true that "at this school, adults know what to do in a crisis". Parents responded in the survey in a similar way. Parents also voiced their comfort with the level of security in the school. When asked, students demonstrated a clear understanding of these procedures and expressed the importance of following them on a regular basis. In spite of clear security protocol, students feel very comfortable in the building during the school day. There are times during the day when students can congregate in a relaxed manner. During lunches seniors have a dedicated area that is solely for their use and underclassmen are comfortable eating lunch scattered in the spacious main hallway of the school. During the school day, juniors and seniors may have an unassigned block and as upperclassmen are not required to report to a study hall. Teachers appreciate that the student body acts in a responsible manner during these aforementioned times, but are concerned about accounting for all students if it were necessary for the school to be in emergency mode during one of these times. The administration indicated their support of the relaxed setting and the comfort of the students in their own school and realize that an accountability for location of all students during such times as lunch is a need of their security and safety planning.

According to the school's self-reflection and confirmed during tour observations, the building is made secure in a variety of ways on a daily basis. Administrators indicated that these procedures have been adjusted each year

based on observed need and feedback from stakeholders. There are both exterior and interior security cameras throughout the campus. The outside doors to the building are all locked each morning. Once school begins, access to the building is limited to an employee card reader system or through the security guard at the main entrance. Though the school was designed with green ways between wings, these are currently locked during the school day as part of security protocol. Visitors to the building must sign in and provide photo identification. All classrooms and staff have interior classroom lockdown keys and all classrooms have phones (with the ability to call 911). A recent addition in security measures includes the installation of bollards in front of exterior doors of the school. One of the future priorities voiced was to include safety laminate over exterior windows similar to the protection on entrance doors.

There is an established working relationship between the school and emergency services personnel. On a monthly basis, school staff members meets with the school resource liaison, the Division Commander for the School Safety Division, in order to review the school's protocols. A full-time police officer who acts as a liaison to the Fairfield Police department is stationed at the school. There is also a full-time school security guard who patrols the building.

Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- classroom observations
- facility tour
- parents
- school leadership
- self-reflection
- students
- teachers

Priority Areas

Priority Area

1. Improvement of teaching and learning through interdisciplinary, departmental collaboration, and research

While the school has excellent examples of teaching and learning that have been acknowledged in the visiting team collaboration conference report, additional interdisciplinary work along with departmental collaboration and research will enhance student learning at Fairfield Warde.

Priority Area

2. Deepening and broadening teaching and learning through innovative use of technology across curricular areas

With the advent of 1-to-1 technology a systemic commitment to teaching strategies (along with appropriate professional development) that utilize technology to enhance instructions will enhance classroom opportunities student learning at Fairfield Warde.

Priority Area

3. Interventions and instruction to support the academic, social, and emotional success of all students

While there are exceptional academic and social/emotional supports for students throughout the school, a commitment to a broad array of intervention and instructional strategies will enhance student learning at Fairfield Warde.

Priority Area

4. Implementation of the Academic, Social, and Civic Expectations to fulfill the Vision of the Graduate

The vision of the graduate as a district initiative has the potential to transform educational experiences as the focus shifts to include assessing the transferable skills that school community has self-selected as the most important skills for the graduates of Fairfield Warde.

Priority Area

5. Personalization of learning to opportunities and assessment to meet the needs of each student

A common definition of the learning environment that this school anticipates providing for students as a result of the vision of the graduate, 1-to-1 technology, and student centered learning approaches will be beneficial to unite all of the priority areas listed above and address this priority area identified by the school's self-reflection committee.

Commendations

Commendation

Standard 1 – Learning Culture

- The safe, positive, respectful, and inclusive culture that ensures equity and honors diversity
- The school community's strong support of and adherence to its core values and beliefs about learning
- The commitment by all staff to assume collective responsibility for the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional well-being of every student
- The varied ways the school culture fosters civic engagement, particularly through its Voices for Equity organization

Commendation

Standard 2 – Student Learning

- The comprehensive curriculum that is complete for every course in the building and written in a common format with critical areas of focus, pacing guides, course overviews, units of study with organizing ideas and essential questions, alignment with Connecticut Core Standards, instructional strategies, and assessment suggestions
- The curriculum format that is unit-based, stressing a depth of understanding over a breadth of knowledge and often highlighting suggested assessments
- The wide variety of assessments used by many teachers that allow students to demonstrate learning in authentic and creative ways as well as supporting student choice
- The multiple opportunities for revision of work, particularly in the English Department with the writing conference

Commendation

Standard 3 – Professional Practice

- The wide range of diverse course offerings, co-curricular activities, and learning opportunities that meet the learning needs of students
- The frequent collaboration and communication between and among all support services staff, regular education staff, and outside agencies to ensure the needs of all students are met
- The widespread commitment to continuous improvement and receptiveness to collaboration, innovation, and reflection

Commendation

Standard 4 – Student Support

- The plethora of intervention strategies to support students social and emotional needs
- The services and support provided to English language learners, students with special education needs including the IMPACT program, and students with specialized plans
- The redesign resulting in the learning Ccommons and the abundance of library/media services and

materials to support teaching and learning

Commendation

Standard 5 – Learning Resources

- The purposeful design of the school (three house model) to encourage staff and student camaraderie, collaboration, and support
- The appropriate funding to ensure safety, security, and academic needs are addressed on an ongoing basis
- The clean and well maintained building and grounds that contribute to a positive school culture

Recommendations

Recommendation

Standard 1 – Learning Culture

- Fully embed the school's vision of the graduate into the school's core values and beliefs about learning.
- Continue to develop and implement a Scientific Research Based Interventions (SRBI) model to ensure equity for all students.
- Allow for greater staff influence on content planning and delivery of professional development.

Recommendation

Standard 2 – Student Learning

- Develop and formalize a process to assess and communicate whole-school and individual learner progress toward achieving the transferable skills identified in the school's vision of the graduate.
- Design and employ a variety of instructional practices for students of all levels that meet the learning needs of each student including student investment and ownership of their learning.
- Ensure that the district curriculum cycle of revision is followed and supported financially.
- Utilize technology to ensure collaboration between students and across curricular areas to support, enhance, and demonstrate learning.

Recommendation

Standard 3 – Professional Practice

- Continue to develop ways to promote interdisciplinary collaboration.

Recommendation

Standard 4 – Learning Support

- Continue to develop and implement a Scientifically Research Based Intervention (SRBI) model to ensure that there is a process to identify and refer students who need additional assistance.
- Expand teacher capacity to examine evidence of student learning through the PLT structure to analyze student data and to better inform Tier I instruction and assessment.
- Build teacher capacity to better provide Tier I support into classroom instruction on a regular basis.

Recommendation

Standard 5 – Learning Resources

- Examine protocols to secure the school building and account for all students during emergencies.

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

This Collaborative Conference visit report reflects the findings of the school's Self-Reflection and those of the visiting team. It provides a blueprint for the faculty, administrators, and other officials to use to improve the quality of programs and services for the students in this school. The faculty, school board, and superintendent should be apprised by the building administrators yearly of progress made in addressing visiting team recommendations.

A school's initial/continued accreditation is based on satisfactory progress implementing valid recommendations of the visiting team 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 submit routine Three- and Six-Year Progress Reports documenting the current status of all 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 team recommendations by the time the Six-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 Decennial Accreditation report recommendations or substantive changes in the school.

To ensure that it has current information about the school, the Commission has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Commission within sixty days (60) of occurrence any substantive change which negatively impacts the school's alignment 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 the Standards for Accreditation. The Commission's Substantive Change Policy is included on the next page. All other substantive changes should be included in the Three- and Six-Year Progress Reports and/or the Annual Information Report (AIR) 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 use the results of the Collaborative Conference Report as well as the school's identified priority areas for growth to draft a school growth and improvement plan, and to review and implement the findings of the Self-Reflection and valid recommendations identified in the Collaborative Conference report. An outline of the Follow-Up Program is available in the Commission's Accreditation Handbook, which is available on the Commission's website.

The visiting team would like to express thanks to the community for the hospitality and welcome. The school community completed a Self-Reflection that clearly identified the school's strengths and areas of need. The time and effort dedicated to the Self-Reflection and preparation for the visit ensured a successful Collaborative Conference visit.

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES Commission on Public Schools

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
- grade level responsibilities of the principal
- cuts in the number of support staff
- decreases in student services
- cuts in the educational media staffing
- increases in student enrollment that cannot be accommodated
- takeover by the state
- inordinate user fees
- changes in the student population that warrant program or staffing modification(s) that cannot be accommodated, e.g., the number of special needs students or vocational students or students with limited English proficiency

Roster of Team Members

Chair(s)

Chair: Mr. Paul Smith - East Hampton Public Schools

Team Members

Mrs. Heather O'Brien - The Morgan School

Ms. Jessica Prince - Academy of Information Technology and Engineering

Mr. Christopher Troetti - Bethel High School