

**New England Association of  
Schools and Colleges**



**Commission on Public Secondary Schools**

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

**Windham, Maine  
October 14 - 17, 2007**

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## **STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS**

### **The Distribution, Use, And Scope Of The Visiting Committee Report**

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

The prime concern of the visiting committee has been to assess the quality of the educational program at Windham High School in terms of the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. Neither the total report nor any of its subsections is to be considered an evaluation of any individual staff member but rather a professional appraisal of the school as it appeared to the visiting team.

### **INTRODUCTION**

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

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

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

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

## School Resources for Learning Community Resources for Learning

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

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

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At Windham High School, a committee of several members including the principal supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned all teachers and administrators in the school to appropriate subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities, and facilities available for young people. In addition to faculty members, the self-study committees included representatives of students, parents, and community members.

The self-study of Windham High School extended over a period of 18 school months. The visiting committee was pleased to note that students, parents, central office professionals, school committee representatives, and citizens joined the professional staff in the self-study deliberations.

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

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

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

A visiting committee of 13 evaluators was assigned by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate Windham High School. The Committee members spent four days in Windham, Maine, reviewed the self-study documents which had been prepared for their examination, met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students and

parents, shadowed students, visited classes, and interviewed teachers to determine the degree to which the school meets the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. Since the evaluators represented public schools and central office administrators, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Windham High School. The visiting team built its professional judgment on evidence collected from the following sources:

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 36 hours shadowing 12 students for a half day
- a total of 6 hours of classroom observation (in addition to time shadowing students)
- numerous informal observations in and around the school
- tours of the facility
- individual meetings with 25 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and the assessment of student learning
- group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers
- the examination of student work including a selection of work collected by the school

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

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

## **Overview of Findings**

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

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

### Mission and Expectations for Student Learning

The Windham High School Mission and Expectations for Learning is reflective of the school and community values as they relate to education. The academic expectations are succinct and express what students need to know and be able to do. At this point, the school has not

developed a set of school-wide rubrics to measure student and school achievement of the academic expectations. There are civic and social expectations. Each speaks to student opportunities in these areas. The civic and social expectations would benefit from further definition so that they are more measurable, allowing the school to define data that will be used to determine the school's success in accomplishing them. Students and parents are not as aware of the role of the school's mission as they should be and would benefit from efforts on the school's behalf to keep them informed of the critical importance of the mission to the culture of the school. A regular cycle of review of the mission and expectations for student learning needs to be developed that includes representation from all constituents of the school community. Decision-making at the school is usually consistent with the tenets of the school's mission, but the various decision-making bodies report that they don't directly refer to the mission when decisions are made. Reference to the school's mission during the decision-making process ensures that the mission remains a vital document and a dynamic force for the direction of the school.

### Curriculum

Windham High School educators have been involved in curriculum development for many years. Processes are in place for this to continue on a five-year review cycle for core curriculum areas. The process is not as well defined for subjects areas outside of the core curriculum. The curriculum is aligned with the Maine Learning Results. Because there are no school-wide rubrics, the curriculum is not directly tied to the academic expectations contained in the school's mission. No one curriculum area has been assigned responsibility for each of the academic expectations so there is no guarantee that they are being taught or assessed. The district has dedicated in-service days as well as individual and group professional development time for curriculum development so developing school-wide rubrics and assignment of responsibility to curriculum areas for the academic expectations can be readily accomplished.

### Instruction

The faculty members at Windham High School are knowledgeable about good instructional practices. Past staff development in this area has given them a good background in teaching strategies that are most useful in promoting sustained learning. Not all faculty members are engaged in these student-centered practices, however, as there remain teacher-centered lessons in some classrooms. It is important that the move to promote more student-centered classes continues so that all students can benefit from this kind of engaging instruction. Instructional practices should also focus the students on the intentional achievement of the academic expectations in the school's mission. Utilization of effective teacher practices across all levels of instruction is also important to ensure that lower levels are benefiting from the same quality of instruction as the higher levels.

### Assessment

The faculty members at Windham High School have the same background in effective assessment practices as they do with instruction. Previous staff development efforts have trained faculty members in these effective assessment strategies. As with instructional strategies, it is important that all faculty members utilize authentic assessment strategies. Although student work shows a reliance on paper and pencil assessments, observations reveal that many faculty members utilize effective assessment strategies. This effective use of varying, authentic

assessment strategies needs to be universal among the faculty members, however. Data must also be collected to assess the school's achievement of the civic and social expectations. It is imperative that school-wide rubrics be developed to assess student and school achievement of the academic expectation in the mission and to inform students of how their work is judged and what they must do to improve it.

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

### Leadership and Organization

Windham High School has strong leadership, especially from the capable, dedicated principal. She is involved in all facets of school life and has provided the staff with a focus on teaching and learning at the school. She has been given autonomy to be the building leader by both the supportive school committee and the superintendent. There are systems in place for faculty input into the decision-making process. There are leadership meetings with other administrators and the central office leaders as well as building-based leadership groups. Faculty members, the school committee, central office leaders, parents, and students all express confidence and appreciation for the role the principal plays in the management of Windham High School. The student body is respectful and shows self-control and understanding of responsibilities. The relationship between students and faculty members and staff members is excellent. Staff members dedicate extra time to assist students who are in need. Advisories are in place to provide an adult whom the student knows well as a counselor and advocate. The current schedule promotes opportunities for depth of instruction over breadth. Student grouping patterns are an area that warrants examination, however. The leveling system should be studied in light of current research to ensure that it is meeting the needs of all students and assuring equality of opportunity. Windham High School has a relaxing, purposeful atmosphere that is welcoming to visitors as well as to staff members and students.

### School Resources for Learning

Support services at Windham High School is an area of strength and all specialties communicate well with parents. Students have a good understanding of services available. The school nurse provides a full array of preventive, emergency, and ongoing services. She communicates and works well with other support service personnel. Guidance services provide individual and college counseling. They communicate well within the department and work well with other support service personnel. Special educators have a positive relationship with regular educators and provide programming that meets the varying needs of the students they serve. The library is well equipped and is capable of serving the needs of the students in the school, but the library/media service personnel must be included on curriculum teams so that the needs of the students can better be met. A formal library curriculum needs to be developed to more consistently and effectively deliver research and information gathering skills to students.

### Community Resources for Learning

The outstanding facility serves the needs of students and staff members. The facility is well-kept and maintained efficiently. The community should be proud of its efforts to provide this fine facility that includes the impressive performing arts center that was funded by local dollars. The revenues to support and maintain programs have been adequate and regularly supported by the community. Care must be taken to ensure that funding levels are based upon the school's mission and not upon "no tax increase" criteria. The school should make additional efforts to

expand partnerships with area colleges and businesses. Continued community support and diligence on the part of the school committee to base decisions on the tenets of the mission will allow Windham High School to realize the full potential of its staff and student body.

Finally, the visiting team wishes to express gratitude for the hospitality extended by the administration and staff at Windham. The positive support for the team's work and candid exchange of information was gratifying. Consequently, this evaluation report should represent a document that highlights the many accomplishments of Windham High School and provides a blueprint for continued improvement.

## **SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PROFILE**

Windham High School is located in Windham, Maine, in the Sebago Lakes Region of south-central Maine. The town of Windham is located approximately thirteen miles northwest of Portland, the state's largest city. Windham High School serves the town of Windham and accepts students, by cooperative agreement, from the abutting town of Raymond. The year-round population of Windham is 14,904 (2000), but the seasonal population can be much higher during the summer months due to tourism and seasonal lakeside residences.

The Windham High School campus is located four miles from Windham's shopping district. The campus also includes Windham Primary School and Windham Middle School. The campus contains, among other facilities, five tennis courts, a football/track stadium, and a number of other athletic fields for practices and contests. The Windham town library is adjacent to the campus, as are the district's school offices and municipal offices. The campus is a distance of approximately twenty minutes away or less from four colleges or universities: the University of Southern Maine (Gorham), University of New England (Portland), University of Southern Maine (Portland), and Saint Joseph's College (Standish).

Little ethnic or racial diversity exists in the district: 98% of the population of Windham is Caucasian – with .9% American Indian, .8% African-American, and .6% Asian. Only 3.5% of the families in Windham were below the poverty level in 1999. The median household income was \$46,526.

Windham serves as a shopping district for the Sebago Lakes region and features hardware stores, drug stores, auto parts stores, a number of banks and credit unions, numerous food and beverage establishments, two movie theaters, gas stations, two home improvement super stores, and three major grocery stores. In 2000, 20.4% of Windham industry was educational, health, and social services; 15.2% was retail; 11.1% was manufacturing; 10.2% was finance, insurance, real estate, and rental leasing; and 8.7% was professional, scientific, and management. The unemployment rate in 2001 was 2.3%.

The school district population for the 2005-2006 school year stood at 2,823. Of this number, 920 were enrolled at Windham High School, which contains grades 9-12. The rest were students at Windham Primary (K-3) and Windham Middle Schools (6-8), as well as the district's elementary school, Manchester school, located near the town's shopping district, which houses grades 4 and

5. Projected student levels for WHS for school year 2006-07 indicate a bump up to approximately 1014 students, and a drop to 997 in the following year. The number of non-resident youth attending schools in the Windham School District is 129 (2005-06), with the majority of those Raymond residents who attend Windham High School. Thirty-six students in the district are home-schooled (thirty elementary; six secondary). In the 2003-04 school year, the average state and district per pupil spending levels were equal - \$7331. The percentage of local resources spent on public education in Windham was 54.54% in 2003-04, and 55.45% in 2004-05. State, federal, and other sources make up the rest. The per-student tuition cost for non-resident students attending Windham schools was \$6790 in 2004-05 (down from \$6812 in 2003-04). In 2003-04, the percentage of local taxes spent on education was 70.5%. In 2004-05, that percentage had dropped to 69.8.

The dropout rate for Windham High School was 1.47% in 2003-04, compared to a state average of 2.67%; the rate was 2.04% in 2004-05, compared to a state average of 2.78%. The average daily attendance rate for students over the same period was 95.52% and 94.92% respectively; and for teachers, 95.43% and 94.51%. In 2004, the percentage of graduates enrolling in four-year colleges and universities was 54%; the percentage enrolling in two-year programs was 18%; those in one-year programs was 6%; those enlisting in the military accounted for 2%; and the number entering the work force was 17%. For the class of 2005, those percentages were 59% in four-year programs; 20% in two-year programs; 5% in one-year programs; 4% in the military; and 12% in jobs. Since 1996, the percentage of graduates pursuing higher education has increased from 66% to 88%.

Windham High School has 87.6 teachers, three main office administrators, an athletic administrator for grades 7-12, 5.6 student support staff, and three other professional staff. There are also twenty educational technicians, eight kitchen staff, and thirteen custodial staff in the school. The average student/teacher ratio is 1:95 or nineteen students per class period taught.

Nearby educational opportunities for students and community include Early Study at USM; Early College for ME at both Central Maine and Southern Maine Community Colleges; and available courses at St. Joseph's College, and the University of Maine. Local vocational and technical schools in which WHS students are enrolled are Portland Arts and Technology High School (PATHS) and Westbrook Regional Vocational Center. The Windham Adult Education program provides adult and continuing education. E-Learning and distance learning programs are available through the American School (correspondence study), and the Westbrook-Windham Community Learning Center.

New school initiatives (in 2005-06 and 2006-07) include student-led conferences; forty-minute daily math classes (as opposed to those that meet three times a week for 80, 39, and 80 minutes respectively); an increased push to encourage more students to seek further education after graduation; a successful "First Day for Freshman" annual experience for ninth-graders; and the introduction of a Targeted Advisory Group (TAG) program for 2007-08, which is aimed at helping twenty to twenty-five incoming "at-risk" ninth-grade students better adjust and succeed at Windham High School. In 2006-07 a program entitled "Think Tank for Teachers of Freshmen" was initiated enable the teachers of ninth-grades students to meet and brainstorm ways to help students who are struggling academically, socially, or otherwise.

Windham High School's "School-to-Work" initiatives are spearheaded by the school's long-standing and highly successful Cooperative Education Program which has been a part of the school's program for twenty-eight years. In the program, approximately twenty-five students per year attend classes in the morning and then work at various businesses in the afternoons and during weekends for about fifteen to twenty-five hours per week. Over 90% of the students involved with the program complete it; many go on to full-time work with the companies with which they have trained. In addition, our Student Services Department arranges for student job-shadowing each year.

In the school year 2005-06, sixty-seven students, or 7.28% of the student population, were receiving special education services. Four students, or .04%, were receiving bilingual/ESL services. The percentage of students taking upper level (Honors and AP) courses in English was 20.3%; foreign languages, 11.8%; mathematics, 11.5%; science, 19.6%; and social studies, 22.2%. The percentages of students enrolled in the lowest level courses were as follows: English, 18.3%; foreign languages, 16.4%; math, 2%; science, 21.4%; and social studies, 20.2%. The mean SAT score for the class of 2005 was 498 verbal and 482 math.

Students are recognized for their successes at WHS in a number of ways. Each year the school presents both an underclassman and senior awards celebration. The school also has a number of honor societies: French National Honor Society (thirty-six students); National Honor Society (seventy-three); Latin National Honor Society (eight); Spanish National Honor Society (fifty-four); and Varsity Club (thirty-six). Additionally, the school sponsors a number of other activities and clubs. Among these are class councils, Drama Club, Exemplar (literary magazine), Eagle Eyes (school newspaper), Film Club, Gay-Straight Alliance, intramural sports, Math Team, Outing Club, Science Olympiad, Windonian (yearbook), chorus, Windham Chamber Singers, band, orchestra, and Dance Club.

Students serve their school and community through participation in Interact, Key Club, Student Outreach and the Civil Rights Team.

### **Windham High School Mission Statement**

Windham High School is a community of learners. We offer a safe, welcoming environment built on a foundation of pride, trust, honesty, and respect. We believe that physical, mental, and social well-being are building blocks for personal and academic success. Our commitment to quality education emphasizes individualized learning experiences, challenging academics, and varied opportunities for creative thinking and healthful risk-taking. Exposure to the arts, to careers, and to areas of personal interest invites meaningful planning for the future. Our fundamental goal is to foster a passion for lifelong learning. Windham High School is truly a place where all can wonder, explore, and achieve.

Our learning community will be one where every student will meet academic, social, and civic expectations.

## ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

Every student will read, write, and speak effectively.

Every student will use inquiry, investigation, and decision-making to solve problems.

Every student will effectively utilize technology as part of his/her learning process.

## SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS

Every student will have multiple opportunities to understand the connection between his/her own behaviors and their impact on others.

## CIVIC EXPECTATIONS

Every student will have multiple opportunities to be an informed and involved citizen.

**COMMISSION ON  
PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

**TEACHING AND LEARNING  
STANDARDS**

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**MISSION AND EXPECTATIONS FOR  
STUDENT LEARNING**

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**CURRICULUM**

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**INSTRUCTION**

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**ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING**

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## TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

# 1

### Mission and Expectations for Student Learning

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

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

#### CONCLUSIONS:

The Windham High School Mission Statement was developed in 2001 by a committee that included students, parents, community members, faculty members, and staff members. This committee engaged in a series of activities that included study and analysis of mission statements of other schools, identification of beliefs and values encompassed within Windham High Schools culture and curriculum, and an analysis of the existing mission statement. After a year of development, the mission statement was approved by the faculty and school committee. A

committee of faculty members revised the mission statement in 2006 to make it more succinct and more reflective of the values and beliefs of the school about student learning. The edited mission statement was transmitted electronically to all faculty members and was also presented to faculty members at a faculty meeting for further input. The final version of the mission statement was approved by the entire faculty in June of 2006. It was not submitted to the school committee for its approval. The mission statement and expectations for learning is posted in all classrooms and offices and is printed in most school publications such as the student and faculty handbooks, the planning guide, and on the school website as well as being reviewed with students in advisory groups at the beginning of the school year. Despite its widespread publication students and parents have only a cursory awareness of the school's mission. The mission statement is supported by the professional staff members who include its tenets in their classrooms, clubs, and organizations. School board approval of the mission document is necessary as this body's endorsement of any changes is representative of the greater community. Until the mission is more embedded in the culture of the school and parents and students are clear about it, the school cannot be assured that all students have opportunities to achieve its common expectations. (self-study, standard committee, mission documents)

When the mission was developed in 2001, the comprehensive nature of the development process and the inclusion of all community and school stakeholders in its development ensured that the mission accurately reflected their fundamental values and beliefs about student learning. The school community's commitment to making Windham High School "a place where all can wonder, explore, and achieve", is embodied in the substantial elective offerings and the wide range of extracurricular opportunities available to students. The availability of alternatives to the regular program such as the REAL School, the development of the learning center, and the wellness center further embody the school's commitment to all students' achievement of the school's mission. Consequently, school programs and practices in conjunction with the 2001 mission development process support the school's fundamental beliefs about student learning. (self-study, teachers, standards committee meeting)

The school has three academic expectations. The 2006 revision of the mission statement made them more measurable. The academic expectations support the mission specifically as it pertains to individualized learning experiences, challenging academics, varied opportunities for creative thinking, and healthful risk-taking. The civic and social expectations refer to opportunities for students to understand the connection between behavior and its impact on others as well as opportunities to be an informed and involved citizen, but they lack clearly written indicators and are difficult to measure. This limits effective opportunities to gather evaluative data. The school has utilized some data regarding the high failure rate and high number of discipline referrals among freshmen that directly led to the establishment of the Freshman Think Tank, the Study Skills Course, and targeted at-risk students in the advisory program. Although there are examples of using data to address social and civic questions, there is no formal program of regular review of specific targeted data. The development of such a review would enable the school to address civic and social problems in a proactive manner rather than a reactive one. (self-study, standards committee meeting, teachers)

The Windham High School principal is currently working on creating staff awareness of the necessity of developing a set of school-wide rubrics to measure student and school achievement

of the academic expectations contained in the school's mission and expectations for learning. There are some rubrics in place that are used widely in some of the departments such as the English department writing rubric. Some departments share other rubrics such as those for oral presentation, but none are used on a school-wide basis to specifically measure and report data regarding each student's and the school's achievement of the academic expectations. Consequently, the school has not identified an acceptable level of achievement on the rubrics because they have not been fully developed. When these school-wide rubrics have been created to measure each of the academic expectations, the school can assess students' or the school's success in achieving the academic expectations. (self-study, department head meeting, standards committee)

The school's civic expectation states that students will have "multiple opportunities to be an informed and involved citizen", and the school's social expectation states that students will have "multiple opportunities to understand the connection between his/her own behaviors and their impact on others". The self-study indicates that the civic and social expectations are defined in the student handbook. The self-study further explains that achievement of the civic and social expectations can be substantiated through survey of discipline records, ongoing behavioral plans, and tallies of community service performed by such organizations as student council, honor societies, and Interact, however, these methods have not been formally developed to gather data on student and school achievement of the civic and social expectations. Each of these expectations would benefit from a clear set of measurable indicators which would enhance the development of evaluative criteria. Without a formal method of assessing the civic and social expectations, the school cannot determine whether or not these expectations are being met. (self-study, standards committee, teachers)

There are examples of how the mission statement has been used to guide various levels of decision-making at the school. The school board reports that all of their decisions are guided by the district mission which is closely aligned with the Windham High School Mission. The school reports that the development of a wide range of course electives and provision for myriad extracurricular opportunities directly support the school's mission, as does the hiring of a literacy specialist to assist in the current literacy initiative. Nevertheless, all constituents in the decision-making process report that explicit use of the mission when making decisions rarely takes place. The regular intentional use of the mission by all decision-making bodies will ensure that decisions directly support the mission and expectations for student learning by design rather than coincidentally. (self-study, school committee, department head meeting)

At this time, the school does not have a plan to regularly review the mission statement, nor has it identified the type of data that will be used for this review. The absence of a plan of review hinders the school from ensuring that the mission statement will continue to reflect student needs, community expectations, and high standards for all students. (self-study, teachers, administrators)

### **Commendations:**

1. The broad representation of the school and community stakeholders in the 2001 development of the school's mission

2. The commitment of the school to ensure that the mission represents its beliefs and values about student learning
3. The widespread publication of the mission and expectations for student learning

**Recommendations:**

1. Obtain school committee approval of the most recent version of the mission statement
2. Develop and implement school-wide rubrics to measure student achievement of each of the academic expectations contained in the mission statement
3. Indicate the targeted level of successful achievement for each of the school-wide rubrics that will be developed for each of the academic expectations contained in the mission statement
4. Develop and implement a formal plan to gather assessment data and report it to all stakeholders on the school's accomplishment of the civic and social expectations contained in the mission statement
5. Develop and implement strategies to create greater student and parent awareness of the school's mission and its importance to the culture of the school
6. Ensure that the mission and expectations for learning are used to guide decision-making at all levels
7. Develop and implement a plan for the regular review of the mission statement and expectations for student learning with representation of all stakeholders

## TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

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# 2 Curriculum

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

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

9. The professional staff shall be actively involved in the ongoing development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum based on assessments of student performance in achieving the school's academic expectations and course-specific learning goals.
10. The school shall commit sufficient time, financial resources, and personnel to the development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum.
11. Professional development activities shall support the development and implementation of the curriculum.

## **CONCLUSIONS:**

The Windham High School Mission Statement clearly identifies academic expectations and divides them into communication, inquiry, and technology areas. The written curriculum contains course-specific learning goals, possible activities, and related assessments. Each course has a syllabus that gives the student guidance about what material will be covered. English, science, social studies, and mathematics courses include performance indicators from the Maine Learning Results in the course descriptions within the planning guide used by students to select courses. Courses are divided into several levels of difficulty. At grades nine and ten courses have three levels: standard, academic, and honors. For grades eleven and twelve, there are four phases of course work available. Most academic areas have not formally aligned the content of their curriculum with the academic expectations contained in the mission statement. There is an extensive variety of elective courses available within the curriculum. They do not indicate what academic expectations from the school's mission are addressed in their curriculum materials. Curriculum documents do not clearly reflect which content areas are responsible for teaching and assessing each academic expectation in the mission statement. Although the school reports that all departments are responsible for teaching the academic expectations, the absence of the assignment of specific academic expectations to a course(s) makes it impossible to determine the individual and school progress of the accomplishment of the academic expectations contained in the mission. Furthermore, since the specific parts of each expectation (ex. reading, writing, or speaking effectively) are not delineated to specific courses, it is possible for some students to have greater opportunities to practice and achieve each expectation than other students. (teachers, planning guide, self-study)

The written curriculum describes course content, and in conjunction with course syllabi, shows course-specific learning goals. Most content areas include instructional strategies as well as suggesting assessments. Relevant school-wide student expectations are not listed within the curriculum documents; however, and most rubrics used are course or department-specific. The English department's writing rubric is used in many core courses, and the oral presentation rubric is used in several subject areas, but there are currently no school-wide rubrics in use. Only when the departments directly connect the curriculum with the academic expectations in the mission and use a system of school-wide rubrics designed to specifically measure these expectations will the school be able to measure student and school success and accomplishment. (curriculum documents, teachers, student work)

Within the working curriculum, all teachers are expected to engage students in inquiry, problem-solving, higher order thinking, and authentic application of knowledge and skills. About 75% of parents and students agree that this is happening. Over 90% of teachers say that critical thinking and problem-solving are part of their classes. Science classes perform inquiry lab activities, social studies students make presentations, English classes analyze literary works, technology classes require students to model real work experiences, and math students help other students to understand concepts. Although there were are examples of teachers using these effective teaching practices, the practices were more often found in the higher-level classes. Teacher-centered instruction has been observed in several standard level classrooms. Furthermore, much of the student work presented by the school demonstrates a reliance on traditional pen and paper approaches to problem-solving. There are many opportunities to showcase authentic assessment in student work. Art projects are prominently displayed throughout the school, theatrical and musical performances occur yearly, and clubs and groups are involved in community activities. Student achievement of the academic expectations can be enhanced when all students have the opportunities to practice higher level skills and student-centered learning, and there are critical thinking skills incorporated in all areas of the curriculum. (student work, self-study, parents)

There are many informal opportunities for curriculum integration. Many teachers discuss integration of curriculum within their classes and attempt to connect their curriculum to real world situations. In a child development class students examine how their own upbringing would affect their abilities to parent, in math classes students determine how statistics would help in deciding the optimum time of day to take their prescribed medications, and in a social studies class after studying the constitution students were asked to explain why it is important to vote in present day elections. There appears to be no formal integration of library skills into the curriculum and little formal cross curriculum integration. While informal integration is productive, a more formalized approach would guarantee integration for all students rather than for only those in creative, student-centered classrooms. (student work, observation, curriculum planning guide)

Block scheduling allows an emphasis on depth of understanding over breadth of coverage. Within the social studies program, World History is taught as a core of general material and then students are allowed to focus on one of five areas, effectively allowing depth of study. The extensive elective offerings available to students also encourage concentrated studies in specific aspects of a subject. In one French course, a project incorporated both integration and depth of study when architecture, biography, drawing, and history were all combined with the language study to produce one comprehensive project. While depth of study is present in courses where project-based and authentic learning is emphasized, there are still classes where teacher-centered practices are evident, particularly in the standard level classes. Emphasis on depth of understanding on a school-wide basis will guarantee that all students benefit from this practice and more students will be engaged in their learning. (student work, observation, curriculum planning guide)

There is a variety of avenues for students to extend learning opportunities. The University of Southern Maine offers courses through The Early College for Maine, and Project Aspire allows students to earn credit in calculus while taking a course with the high school math department.

Approximately 60 students attend the Westbrook Regional Vocational Center and the Portland Art and Technology High School. The Outdoor Activities program at the REAL School uses a hands-on approach to accommodate individual student needs outside of the classroom. Some special needs students have the opportunity to use the pool at St. Joseph's College. Although students have opportunities to extend their learning beyond the classroom, the close proximity of Windham High School to area colleges and businesses offers an opportunity for the school to further expand opportunities in this area for more students. (self-study, parents, teachers)

Windham High School provides K-12 committees for the purpose of curriculum coordination and articulation within and between the academic areas and sending schools. Although there is coordination between departments, no formal mechanism is in place to promote interdepartmental coordination. The district began revising the K-12 curriculum in 2004-2005 after a series of four different curriculum leaders. There is in place a five-year cycle of curriculum development in core areas to address scope and sequence in order to deliver a seamless curriculum. This process has three phases, revision, implementation, and review. Since all departments are at differing points in the curriculum process, budget requests can be spread out allowing for an even distribution of requests over time, thus making it possible for effective budgetary planning. Individual departments have weekly common planning time and periodic K-12 meetings that primarily occur when a department comes up for curriculum review. The need for cross-curricular coordination cannot be met without additional interdepartmental communication and emphasis. (principal, curriculum coordinator, teachers)

Instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, library/media resources, and the facility are sufficient to allow for the implementation of the curriculum. Most departments including modern languages, English, health and physical education, social studies, music, and allied arts, report that staffing levels and funding are sufficient to support the curriculum. However, social studies teachers carry a class load larger than most other departments and report less funding while health and physical education have large class populations. High class numbers and funding issues can have a negative impact on the implementation of the curriculum in these areas as well as creating equity issues among the staff. (faculty members, parents, teachers)

The professional staff is actively involved in ongoing professional development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum. The district commits significant resources to professional development. Besides the five days and five early release days devoted to school-wide professional development, faculty and staff members can attend conferences related to their specific curriculum areas, as when a teacher's duties were eliminated in order to allow her to take the course from the teacher who is currently teaching it as preparation for teaching an AP course the next year. The principal endorsed this shift in duties as an example of meaningful professional development. Common planning time and some released time provides ongoing opportunities for evaluation and revision of curriculum. Freshman Think Tank, the grade nine study skills course and the initiative on literacy are solid examples of student performance and assessment driving curriculum. Continued emphasis on professional development will produce a positive effect on the school's academic expectations through better teaching and learning. (administrators, teachers, self-study)

Sufficient financial resources and personnel are committed to the development, evaluation, and revision of Windham High School's curriculum. However, only 51% of the professional staff agrees that the school provides sufficient time to develop, evaluate, and revise curriculum. Time is allocated through common planning time, in-service days, professional development days, and paid summer work for curriculum work. While more communication with staff members on time allocation would be helpful, there is adequate funding and personnel to support the curriculum. (self-study, curriculum coordinator, standards committee)

**Commendations:**

1. The wide range of course offerings that includes a rich elective program
2. The opportunity for students to participate in the REAL school
3. Administrative support of curriculum related professional development
4. Financial and personnel resources committed to the support of curriculum development

**Recommendations:**

1. Develop and implement a plan to delineate the specific academic expectations addressed and assessed in each curriculum area
2. Create and use school-wide rubrics consistently to assess student accomplishment of the academic expectations contained in the mission
3. Ensure that curricula at all levels engages students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking and authentic assessment
4. Develop and implement a process to formalize integration and increase depth of study in all areas of the curriculum
5. Formally coordinate cross-curriculum efforts
6. Examine funding and staffing patterns to ensure that equity exists among departments

## TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

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### 3 Instruction

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

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

## CONCLUSIONS:

Some Windham High School teachers use a variety of instructional strategies that adequately support the school's mission statement. The original development of the current mission statement is a result of collaboration between the members of the school community. Because of this collaboration, instructional practices used by some teachers accurately reflect the goals of the school's mission statement. Some teachers "emphasize, individualized learning experiences, challenging academics, and varied opportunities" through various forms of student-centered instruction. Not all teachers employ these instructional practices, however classroom observations show that some teachers primarily use teacher-centered instruction and do not vary their instructional methods. The use of varying instructional methods is teacher-specific. In most classrooms, there are no direct references made to the academic expectations in the mission statement either in lesson planning or instruction. As a result, there are no guarantees that the students are getting opportunities to practice the skills necessary to be successful in achieving the academic expectations of the mission statement or that they recognize the connections between the mission and their class work. (self-study, teachers, observations)

Some teachers at Windham High School employ instructional strategies that personalize instruction, engage students as active learners, provide students with opportunities to apply knowledge of skills, and promote self-assessment and self-reflection. Teachers, students, and parents report that students are frequently challenged in their classes. Students engage in activities such as writing research papers, completing lab reports, participating in mock trials, doing group research, and peer teaching. To meet the instructional needs of at risk students, the school cooperates with the local Real School, an alternative education program that emphasizes outdoor experiential education as well as individualized skills development. In order to ensure that all students' needs are being met, teachers staff the Learning and Wellness centers, and all staff members provide after school office hours every week to provide personalized instruction. To meet student needs, the introduction of a block schedule increases the opportunities for students to engage in higher order thinking. The schedule for standard level math classes has been changed to daily 40-minute periods, and standard level class sizes have been capped at 15 students. Some teachers provide engaging and personalized instruction within individual classes and occasionally make connections across content areas, but there are few examples of interdisciplinary lessons and activities. Some examples of connections to other disciplines during instruction include students learning about the history of math in College Preparatory Math, writing a research paper in technology class, learning about the judicial system in English class, and applying knowledge from math class in science classes. Instructional practices at Windham occasionally provide students with chances to evaluate and reflect upon their work. Some examples of student self-reflection include assessing the amount of class participation in English class, completing and assessing portfolios in science classes, and reflecting upon work for student-led conferences. Increased opportunities for students to experience interdisciplinary instruction will allow for stronger connections among content areas and support student achievement of the academic expectations in the mission. Self-reflection and self-assessment will enable students to recognize their own learning needs and styles, and to become self-motivated learners. (observations, teachers interviews, department leaders, student work)

Many teachers at Windham High School use feedback from a variety of sources such as other teachers, students, and supervisors as a method of improving instruction. Parents provide some informal feedback that affects instruction through such events as fall open house, student-led conferences, individual teacher-parent meetings throughout the year, e-mail, and phone conversations. Although not a widespread concept, some teachers have their students evaluate them each semester and then use the feedback to adjust instruction. Teachers are evaluated on a 3-year rotation, using a tool that was developed by teachers and administrators. The protocol involves several informal and formal evaluations including a pre-conference and then a post conference to discuss evaluation. Teachers agree that this tool is effective in improving instruction. Most teachers at Windham High School benefit from a reasonable amount of feedback from various sources, leading to improved instruction and ultimately leading to improved student success. (department leaders, central office administrators, school leadership team)

A majority of teachers at Windham High School are experts in their content area, knowledgeable about research on instructional practices, and reflective about their own practices. Teachers are required to set yearly goals for improving instructional strategies as part of the school's teacher evaluation process. According to teachers, in-house professional development opportunities are occasionally chosen by administrators with these instructional goals in mind. Teachers attend workshops and complete coursework in order to fulfill requirements for certification in the State of Maine. Teachers are members of a wide range of content-specific organizations and associations. Teachers new to the district are required to be a part of the Collaborators for Student Success (CSS) that supports progress, reflection, and proficiency in many areas including instructional strategies. These teachers must attend bi-weekly meetings for the first two years and provide evidence of proficiency in the ten professional teacher standards set forth by the state. Informal collaboration among teachers provides opportunities to discuss instructional strategies. As a result, most teachers are experts in their content areas and are reflective about their teaching practices. (teachers, self-study, building administrators)

Discussion of instructional strategies is a significant part of the professional culture of Windham High School. Common planning time is given to most departments for 40 minutes weekly providing teachers an opportunity to discuss instructional strategies. This time also allows teachers to assist one another with feedback, develop cooperative activities among department members, create activities and lessons that promote student centered learning, and provide moral support or sharing how to best teach a lesson. Although collaboration among departments and has enhanced the many practices mentioned above, collaboration has not led to rich interdisciplinary learning experiences for students. A greater emphasis on interdisciplinary learning during collaboration time would increase student opportunities for such learning. (teachers, school leadership team, self-study)

Technology is used in instructional practices at Windham High School. When available, some teachers use technology to improve instructional practices and support student success. Examples such as using laptops in classes for writing reports, doing online research, completing lab activities using digital lab equipment in science classes, viewing information presented via LCD projectors, using graphing calculators in math classes small low number of computer carts makes it difficult at times to integrate technology into instructional practices. Students at

Windham High School have had individual access to laptop computers in grades seven and eight. Students and teachers alike agree that the same access to laptops at the high school level would greatly enhance technology integration at the school. (teachers, students, parents, student work)

The professional development program and opportunities are guided by identified instructional needs. Throughout the re-accreditation, professional development time and money has been spent on the process. Recently, the faculty was involved in a common read which was identified by administrators to help improve faculty effectiveness. Prior to that, the school administration has shown a strong support for professional development days in a continuous effort to improve instructional practices. Many teachers have attended state, regional, and national conferences. Most professional development opportunities are supported and funded and directly related to instructional strategies and needs. Generally, the professional development funds are directly related to both teachers' individual needs and accomplishment of district-wide goals such as the current literacy goal. This balanced approach allows for individual teacher growth and the furthering of district goals. (self-study, teachers, leadership team)

The teacher supervision and evaluation process is used with some success to improve instruction for the purpose of enhancing student learning; however, there is currently no formal opportunity for peer observation and reflection. Each continuing contract teacher goes through an evaluation process that takes place on a 3-year rotation. The principal and/or one of the two assistant principals conducts formal and informal observations of teachers. A pre-observation, pre-conference summary and post-conference are conducted with each teacher during their cycle. All teachers new to Windham High are assigned a content mentor and are part of CSS, Collaborators for Student Success. In addition, teachers new to Windham create portfolios to show progress, reflection, proficiency, and professionalism. The teachers use all this information with their mentors to improve their instruction. As a result of these evaluations, needs, methods, commendations, recommendations, and yearly goal-setting takes place among all staff. Most teachers say that they meet success in improving their instruction and thus enhance student learning. (school leadership, teachers, school documents)

**Commendations:**

1. Some teachers' use of a variety of instructional practices that meet the needs of students
2. Collaboration with alternative education programs such as the REAL School
3. The creation and use of the learning and wellness centers to provide personalized instruction
4. The use of instructional strategies integrating technology
5. The attention given to personalization of students' school experience by faculty members and staff
6. Use of current research and professional development to improve instruction

7. Administrative support for professional instructional related development activities

**Recommendations:**

1. Develop a formal structure for teachers to work collaboratively across disciplines and to discuss the improvement of instruction
2. Offer opportunities for student self-assessment and reflection across the curriculum
3. Investigate the need for on-site alternative education programs to meet the needs of diverse learners
4. Examine the need for an increased amount of technology available to students for instructional purposes
5. Evaluate instructional strategies to ensure that they are targeting student achievement of the academic expectations in the mission
6. Ensure that teachers make explicit connections between the mission and expectations and their classroom work
7. Provide a formal structure for teachers to increase interdisciplinary learning

## TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

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### **4** Assessment of Student Learning

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

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

## CONCLUSIONS:

The use of school wide rubrics is not consistent at Windham High School. The school does not have a process in place to assess school-wide and individual student progress in achieving the academic expectations in the mission based on school-wide rubrics. Teachers have described how that they cover the academic expectations in the mission but not explicitly. Very few teachers claim to communicate regularly with students about the academic expectations in the mission statement. Students report that they have been introduced to the mission statement at the beginning of the school year, yet they are not able to explain the impact it has on their education. Teachers are required to provide syllabi for each course they teach, and many use course-specific rubrics. The Windham High School writing rubric is used by some teachers in the English, social studies, science, and foreign language departments. There are department-wide and individual classroom assessments in the school. “Creative project” rubrics, “visual product” rubrics and “AP style” rubrics are used in the English department and in some social studies courses. Portfolios, written examinations, results of the North West Educational Assessment (NWEA), and the Preliminary SAT and the SAT are used to assess academic achievement. Although a wide variety of assessment strategies is being used by teachers, none is specifically used to assess student accomplishment of the academic expectations in the school’s mission. As a result of the absence of formal process and no school-wide rubrics to assess the academic expectations in the mission statement, there is no way to determine whether students are achieving the expectations and no data upon which to base curriculum and instruction improvements. (teachers, students, self-study, student work)

There is no formal process to evaluate the school’s success in achieving its civic and social expectations. Administrators and faculty members cite many opportunities where social and civic expectations can be met by a majority of the student population. There is a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, clubs, and organizations that may be related to these expectations but whose activities are not formally measurable and can be used to assess the school’s progress in on achieving the civic and social expectations. Several teachers report that their own individual course expectations address the civic and social expectations. So, while there is not a formal process of looking at specific data to assess the civic and social expectations, consistently the faculty has looked at data on a more informal basis. When Windham High School data showed a high failure and discipline referral rate for grade nine student, the Freshman Think Tank was established to address these concerns. A faculty directed advisory program as established as well as the freshman study skills course. The freshman think tank group continues to brainstorm and create programs to assist grade nine students to have a positive transition to Windham high School. A formal program of examining school-wide civic and social data would result in the identification of student success in meeting the civic and social goals and could lead to additional programs if needs are identified; the data could be used to report to the community so a greater understanding of this aspect of the school’s mission could be assured. (administrators, teachers, students)

Teachers consistently clarify and communicate course-specific and departmental goals for students. Students agree that the teachers are clear about what is expected of them in their courses. This same clarification is not made regarding the academic expectations in the mission statement. Some teachers mention communicating the expectations to their students at the

beginning of the school year through the review of the student handbook in their advisory groups. Thus, while it appears that some students do discuss the academic expectations, there is no consistent intentional focus on them making their importance and acquisition unclear for students. As teachers clarify course-specific learning goals in a majority of courses, they provide models and course specific rubrics to inform students of the expected quality of work. The absence of school-wide rubrics to assess the academic expectations in the mission results in a lack of clarity of how student work is directly related to the achievement of the academic expectations in the mission statement and the lack of student understanding of how such achievement is judged and how to improve their own success. (teachers, self-study, student work)

Teachers use a variety of assessment strategies at Windham High School. Among the variety are portfolios, projects, essays, lab reports, paper and pencil tests, and oral presentations. Although this variety of assessment is taking place, examination of student work shows an emphasis on paper and pencil assessments. Classroom observations and discussions with students indicate that there is a more balanced approach to assessment strategies. A rich example of the use of a variety of assessment practices comes from a Spanish IV class. A project incorporated several strategies including an oral report, essay, and mapping. Rubrics are clearly defined and accompany a grade summary sheet. It is important that assessment practices like these become universal among the teachers and do not remain course or teacher-specific. By incorporating a variety of assessments, teachers provide opportunities for each student to take advantage of their learning strengths and demonstrate their level of understanding of concepts taught. (student work, teachers, parents)

Teachers meet weekly during their common planning time. The purpose of these meetings is stated in the Windham High School self-study as “to work on formal curriculum and assessment requirements.” Faculty meetings are designed to discuss many issues including those surrounding assessment and curriculum. Department meetings are formal meeting times to address curriculum and assessment. Although these meeting times can be used to discuss assessment practices, there is no formal plan or routine place to ensure this work is being done consistently. Examination of student work is not regularly scheduled as part of the common planning time, department meetings, or faculty meetings. The discussion of assessment results and their impact on curriculum does take place during some of the various group sessions, but it is done informally, and its emphasis is dependent upon each group rather than systematically planned. As a result, there is no guarantee that the collaboration regarding assessment work is goal-oriented or consistent among all groups. (self-study, school leaders, teachers)

There are many opportunities for professional development at Windham High School. Teachers report that they are supported in pursuing individual and departmental goals. In the past, this has included assessment, and some teachers use a variety of assessments in their classes and could assist others to do so. Teachers are provided common planning times within the daily schedule to address curriculum and assessment. The focus of professional development has been alignment of the curriculum with the Maine Learning Results, the development of the local assessment system, preparation of the NEASC self-study, and, most recently, the literacy initiative, and there is no comprehensive plan on the part of the school or the district in addressing assessment specifically. Without a process in place to examine professional

development needs in the area of assessment, the important work of ensuring that all faculty members are utilizing a variety of assessment practices, and the development and implementation of school-wide rubrics to assess the academic expectations cannot be accomplished. (teachers, school leaders, professional development data)

The school communicates to parents individual student progress on standardized tests such as the Preliminary SAT, and the SAT, and it communicates its school-wide progress on the Preliminary SAT and SAT to the school board and community. Teachers also inform parents of the criteria which will be used to assess student work. Teachers create expectations for individual courses and distribute them to their students in their syllabi. In some courses, teachers require parents to sign the expectations, ensuring their awareness. Traditional grade and progress reporting methods are used to communicate student success in individual courses. Windham High School does not yet have school-wide rubrics to assess the academic expectations as stated in the mission statement nor does it have a formal process to use the school-wide rubrics. As a result, both the school and parents have no way of assessing student or school progress as it relates to the academic expectations contained in the mission. (parents, teachers, support services staff)

**Commendations:**

1. The use of course and department level specific rubrics in some courses
2. The clear communication by teachers of the course-specific learning goals
3. The use of assessment results to make decisions about curriculum
4. The support for professional development on an individual and/or department basis

**Recommendations:**

1. Develop and implement a formal process to use the newly developed school-wide rubrics to assess the academic expectations in the mission statement
2. Develop and implement a formal process to use the data collected regarding the civic and social expectations in order to make changes in programs to address school-wide achievement of these expectations
3. Ensure teachers clarify to students the relevant school-wide academic expectations covered by specific courses
4. Implement a protocol by which formal meeting times provide a consistent planned focus on examination of student work and assessment practices
5. Coordinate and plan professional development activities that ensure the use of an effective variety of assessment strategies among all faculty members and provide for the development of school-wide rubrics to assess student

6. Establish a method of communicating individual achievement of academic, civic, and social expectations to students, parents, and the community

# **COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

## **SUPPORT STANDARDS**

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**LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION**

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**SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**

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**COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR  
LEARNING**

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## SUPPORT STANDARD

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# 5 Leadership and Organization

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

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

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

## **CONCLUSIONS:**

The principal of Windham High School enjoys sufficient autonomy and authority to lead the school based on the superintendent's conscious management style based on delegation that promotes building-level autonomy. The principal's autonomy extends to budget development, policy proposals, establishment of various school improvement committees, and professional development planning. The school board's first priority is the success and well-being of all students in the school, and its members express confidence in the principal. The principal's strong leadership supports the school community's efforts in achieving the mission and expectations for student learning. (school committee, teachers, superintendent, self-study)

The principal serves as the school's instructional leader and focuses the school community on student learning. She leads the Building Achievement Council (BAC) in their twice-monthly meetings. BAC includes in its membership faculty members who "wear many hats": curriculum leaders, the principal, assistant principals, think tank liaison, the literacy specialist, and the director of guidance. Deliberations result in budgeting, scheduling, staffing, assessment, and other types of planning decisions. (self-study, administrators, central office personnel)

The principal fosters a culture of change that has supported several school initiatives. Examples of initiatives that benefit from her support and leadership are: international field trips, student-led conferences, common planning time, student-driven co-curricular activities, teacher-driven initiatives (rock wall, daily math classes, Windham High School Freshman Think Tank, etc), and early college opportunities. As a highly visible and effective role model, the principal maintains an unequivocal focus on student learning that pervades the school community. (self-study, panel presentation, facility tour, teachers)

Faculty and staff members throughout the school assume leadership responsibilities crucial to student success. The administrative team comprised of the principal, assistant principals, and the athletic director meets weekly to address building operations, curriculum issues, and school climate concerns. Curriculum leaders serve as members of the BAC have responsibilities around instruction, learning, and budgeting. The advisory council includes the members of the administrative team and four elected teachers. Their role is to hear staff concerns and direct them to the appropriate body for resolution. As school leaders, the assistant principals evaluate

and supervise staff members, provide professional development, act as liaison support for departments, serve on a variety of school improvement committees, and chair individual education plan (IEP) meetings. Content area departments are led by curriculum leaders who oversee budget, assign teaching duties, participate in the hiring process, provide informal support for department members, and coordinate the development of curriculum and assessment strategies. Many faculty members serve as athletic coaches and advisors to student clubs and organizations. In survey results, teachers report that 85.9% of the staff assumes a variety of leadership roles. Staff involvement contributes greatly to the positive school environment and the development of a community of learners. (school leadership team, self-study, central office administrators, teachers)

Although not clearly driven by the school's mission and expectations, the organization of the school and its educational programs support student learning. The school has made some efforts to establish smaller, more personalized learning communities. Some examples are advisories, daily math classes, electives that allow students to "wonder, explore, and achieve", Westbrook Regional Vocational Program and Portland Arts and Technology High School, cooperative education, business simulation, and clubs and activities that promote exploration and immersion in issues that effect school and society. Students are encouraged to utilize the learning labs to support their academic success. Extra effort has been made to ensure smaller class sizes in the standard level courses and freshman classes to provide attention to individual student needs. Student learning is positively impacted by the numerous curricular and co-curricular opportunities. (self-study, teachers, student shadow)

Though student grouping patterns reflect the diversity of the student body, they do not foster heterogeneity and high expectations for all students. Most classes at Windham High School are homogeneously grouped, reflecting many faculty members' belief that such ability grouping best meets the educational needs of students. Course placement is based on test scores, grades, parent requests, and teacher recommendation. There are opportunities for vertical movement in core areas and opportunities for placement in multiple phases. Curriculum committees are in the process of establishing "essential learnings" so that all students meet the same expectations. The faculty has not explored current educational research on grouping practices. Traditional tracking practices open doors to post-secondary learning for students tracked in the upper levels, but because of lower expectations and less emphasis on higher order thinking skills may not be meeting the needs and aspirations of the lower leveled students. It is time for this school to investigate theories of better pedagogy and open a dialogue with both teachers and parents about equality of opportunity for all students as is described in the school's mission. (student work, self-study, student shadowing, panel presentation, central office administration, teachers)

The schedule supports effective implementation of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The school has created common planning time within departments and advisory time. The block schedule provides time necessary to meet academic expectations in the mission statement, and the high school schedule supports student participation at Westbrook Regional Vocational School. Flexibility in scheduling frees teachers to provide academic assistance in learning labs. The eight- period schedule promotes the incorporation of new and challenging advanced placement courses and a variety of elective courses. Opportunities for early college studies, summer classes, and correspondence courses permit students to recover credit and/or advance,

and 80 minute blocks provide sufficient time for a range of assessment and instructional strategies. Modifications to the block schedule have accommodated the needs of students in music and math. All eight classes meet for 39 minutes each Wednesday, and 40 minute-daily math classes have been created to meet the needs of students in the standard level. Faculty members report that, as a result of the new schedule, they are better able to implement curriculum, effective instruction, and a variety of assessment forms. (panel presentation, district administrators, teachers)

The level of meaningful participation by faculty members, parents, and students in the decision-making process varies according to the nature of the issues under consideration. A number of structures is in place to promote participation in the decision-making process. All stakeholders report favorably regarding the open door policy of school administrators. For faculty members, opportunities to impact decisions include Zoomerang Surveys for soliciting input, the advisory council, and the BAC. The student council surveys students to collect feedback on school issues and meets occasionally with the school board to present their concerns. Parent forums have been held to gain input on the design of the new building and the new attendance policy. Students, staff, and parents have served on hiring committees and assisted in the development of design plans for the new facility. Survey results from parents, staff, and students indicate dissatisfaction with some aspects of the decision-making process, however as some believe that opportunities for meaningful involvement are not consistently available, hindering the development of shared ownership. (school committee, panel presentation, parents, self-study)

With few exceptions, teachers are responsible for a manageable student load. The addition of new faculty members permits reduced class loads in freshman classes and standard track classes where there was such a need. An average teacher/student ratio of 1:95 or 19 students per class period contributes to the ability of teachers to meet individual student needs. Parents report frequent communication with teachers, and students highlight the ample extra time available with their teachers. (self-study, student shadowing, panel presentation, teachers)

The formal homeroom advisory program is one component of a system that is designed to ensure that each student is known well by at least one adult in the building. Advisory groups of eight to 14 students with one adult remain constant over the course of four years, meeting for 13 minutes, four days per week. Currently, advisory is unstructured, lacking curriculum, and not purposefully aligned with the mission of the school. However, the potential is there to promote an environment of pride, trust, honesty, and respect, support personal and academic success for students, and encourage participation in the academic, social, and civic opportunities inherent in the co-curricular offerings. A curriculum and some supervision will be necessary to achieve this. The REAL School is an alternative education program that meets the varied needs of students through teacher familiarity with each student so they can tailor an individualized program for students. The varied components of both the formal and informal program to personalize each student's educational experiences succeed in making a large school feel smaller and more meaningful for students. (panel presentation, central office administrators, parents, student shadowing)

Curriculum, instruction, and assessment have been positively affected by the creation of common department planning time scheduled regularly during the school week. This time was created for

teachers by the principal with the ultimate goal of positively impacting student achievement. Faculty members continue to request more time to develop, evaluate, and revise curriculum within content areas and to work vertically with middle school colleagues. Some examples of collaboration include Collaborators for Student Success which is the support group for first- and second-year teachers, and the Windham High School Freshman Think Tank, teachers working together to improve the freshman year experience. Increasing opportunities for collaboration among faculty members have strengthened the focus on teaching, learning, and student achievement. (panel presentation, self-study, central office administrators, teachers.)

Adults at Windham High School share responsibility for promoting the well-being and learning of students and demonstrate sincere concern for members of the school community. Secretaries, bus drivers, custodians, and food service workers often develop lasting relationships with students. Educational technicians routinely provide academic and emotional support for a wide array of students. The school resource officer is credited with raising the level of student support through his presence in the school. The caring demeanor of so many adults in the building contributes to student feelings of comfort and ownership. (self-study, teachers, students, student shadow, school support staff)

Academic, social, and civic achievements are regularly celebrated at Windham High School. Hallways and classrooms of the new building feature student work, and souvenirs of victories, awards, presentations, and honors. Annual events include honor society inductions, awards and honors assemblies, performances featuring Windham's renowned musicians and thespians, and competitions involving athletes proudly representing the school and community. Ongoing recognition of student achievement contributes to the overall positive school environment. (self-study, student shadow, facility tour, panel presentation, classroom observations, support staff)

Students, parents, and faculty and staff members at Windham High School report feeling safe and proud of the school. Although not all students are fully engaged, student interactions are appropriate. Clearly defined discipline and attendance policies set forth appropriate expectations but are sometimes inconsistently enforced. Parents report that outside doors are sometimes unlocked or propped open, and there is a concern that school security may be compromised. Throughout the building, the atmosphere is characterized by pride, involvement, and respect. A nurturing environment in which respect and caring abound, coupled with the addition of a school resource officer, school board support for a safe and orderly environment, and a spacious new facility, have positively impacted teaching and learning. (school committee, facility tour, classroom observations, teachers, self-study, student shadow, support staff members)

The school board members base their decision-making on the district's strategic plan. School board members feel no direct connection to the school's mission and have made no purposeful efforts to align policies, budget allocations, educational focus, or committee decisions with the mission. However, the board has taken steps to promote student learning through support of the school building project, literacy and numeracy goals, funding for a literacy specialist, approval of courses new to the planning guide, and new policies regarding graduation requirements, expulsion, attendance, and promotion. In the face of steadily increasing high school enrollment, teachers voice concern that budget allocations have not kept pace with operational and educational needs, however. Budgets allocations need to be aligned with the needs of the

students and their accomplishment of the school's mission rather than the goal of keeping a zero tax increase in the community which has been the practice in recent years. (school committee members, central office administrators, teachers, self-study, Endicott survey)

**Commendations:**

1. The level of autonomy and decision-making authority generally afforded the principal
2. Sustained principal support for faculty and staff members and students
3. Multiple (and encouraged) opportunities for leadership
4. The positive climate that instills a sense of pride and ownership in staff, students, and parents and has resulted in a safe, respectful school environment
5. The dedication of the staff that has resulted in a safe, respectful school environment
6. The tradition of celebrating student success
7. Student loads that enable teachers to meet the academic needs of individual learners
8. A schedule that allows flexibility and student access to a wide range of core and elective classes
9. The extensive showcasing of student work

**Recommendations:**

1. Expand the number of smaller, more personalized learning communities within the school
2. Support the school board in purposefully connecting their decisions to the high school's mission and expectations
3. Evaluate current use of common department time in light of staff requests for more time for curriculum development, analysis of student work, and sharing of instructional practices
4. Evaluate the advisory program and use this information to develop a more focused mission for the program including a curriculum and some coordination
5. Create a plan to increase student voice in all facets of school life
6. Create formal channels for parent input into school based decisions
7. Establish and communicate a clear decision-making process that includes input from all facets of the school community

8. Undertake a study of the school's current grouping practices, using current research on the impact on the student opportunities to be involved in higher order thinking, problem solving, and the authentic application of knowledge and skills and educate teachers and parents about this

## SUPPORT STANDARD

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# 6

## School Resources For Learning

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

### All Student Support Services

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

### Guidance Services

8. The school shall provide a full range of comprehensive guidance services, including:
  - individual and group meetings with counseling personnel;

- personal, career, and college counseling;
- student course selection assistance;
- collaborative outreach to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers;
- appropriate support in the delivery of special education services for students.

### **Health Services**

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

### **Library Information Services**

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

### **Special Education Services**

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

## CONCLUSIONS:

The guidance department, health services, library/information services, and special education services are consistent with the school's mission. Guidance, health, and special education provide comprehensive student services to ensure all students are able to reach their full potential and overcome barriers to learning. Library/information services has the potential to meet expectations for student learning, but work needs to be done in creating a formal curriculum and integrating it throughout the school. The departments work together to support the students through a variety of services. Guidance, special education and health services provide students with support to realize their physical, social, and mental well-being and to achieve academic success. (self-study, Building Achievement Council (BAC), subcommittee meeting)

The school adequately allocates resources, programs, and services so that all students have an equal opportunity to achieve the school's expectations for student learning. All students meet with their school counselor to create four-year plans during the ninth grade, and all students meet with the counselor junior year for post secondary planning, but there is no established mechanism to ensure that all students participate in individual meetings with their counselor each year of high school. Some students report that they are not aware that the school has a full-time social worker and part-time substance abuse counselor. All students participate in an advisory period and remain with the same advisor and school counselor for all four years, which helps to personalize their learning. The school provides special education programming for qualifying students and a pre-referral process exists. The school has a full-time nurse who creates health plans, manages medications, assists with the health curriculum and responds as needed. Students report a high level of comfort when seeking help from the school resource officer. Library media services provides adequate resources but does not have a comprehensive, integrated program to instruct students in the full range of skills needed to benefit from those resources. As a result, not all students develop strong research skills to support their learning. Discussions with faculty and staff members indicate a need for on-site alternatives to regular education for students who do not qualify for special education services. The learning center is a new initiative which provides support beyond the classroom. Although The REAL School is a successful alternative education program, some students would benefit from flexible on-site alternative classes. On-site alternative classes would benefit more students, thus creating additional personalized learning experiences that would enhance their educational experience. (student shadow, students, parents, teachers)

The student services staff interacts and works cooperatively with special education, the health office, and classroom teachers, along with administrators, parents and support staff members to ensure that student needs are being met and to address barriers to education. The school counseling office frequently consults with faculty and staff members on a variety of student issues. Staff report that the school counselors and social worker respond to referrals made by teachers. The position of school social worker also serves to help with a variety of student issues. The substance abuse counselor is working at the school through contracted services of Day One, a community alcohol and substance abuse agency. Each week, the student services team (guidance and social worker) meets with administrators and the school resource officer to discuss student needs along with attendance and behavioral data from the prior week (ten at ten meetings). In addition, the student services staff meets monthly to coordinate services and

discuss cases. School counselors and the social worker are well informed about local and community resources for a variety of student concerns and frequently assist families with referrals. The school nurse and athletic trainer work with students as needed to address medical/health needs. The special education staff provides individual education plans and 504 accommodation plans for qualifying students. Collaborative teacher/librarian partnerships are not a large part of the library/information services program so that students' academic needs in this area are not fully met. (self-study, teachers, support service staff )

Support service personnel (guidance counselors, school nurse, library media specialist, and special education teachers) are evaluated in the three-year professional review cycle. During the last evaluation of the library media specialist by the school principal the Maine Association of School Librarians' job description was used to include all three aspects of the school library media specialist's job. The principal recognizes that the standard evaluation tool for teachers does not best address the professional needs of the nurse or the counselors and therefore has worked with student services staff to develop a standards-based evaluation that includes goal setting. Informal evaluation occurs through peer feedback among counselors and the student services staff. As a result of the differing and unique roles of student support services staff members, evaluations using job-specific models provide more meaningful feedback that results in improved services for students. (teachers, standard subcommittee, self-study)

There is an effective communication system designed to inform students, parents/guardians, and school personnel about the types of available student support services. There are multiple ways that parents/guardians, students, and school personnel are informed about student support services. Information is available through a student services brochure, a school newsletter, school website, individual letters home and the local newspaper. Parents are very satisfied with their communication with school counselors. School counselors are available for appointments, phone consultation, and communicate via e-mail on a regular basis. Further, the school counseling office is open for one evening each week to meet with parents and students. One parent commented that she appreciated the willingness of school counselors to pursue professional development to familiarize themselves with her student's specific needs. The counseling department provides exemplary communication with parents and makes efforts to keep parents well informed. For example, after progress reports and report cards are distributed, school counselors send personalized letters with invitations to meet with parents of at-risk students. Some students are not informed about the full range of school counseling services available to them through student services and report a lack of awareness about accessing their school counselor for personal/emotional counseling. Therefore, some students may not seek out services to help them overcome barriers to learning. Parents report that the school nurse provides communication to parents as needed related to individual student health needs. The school nurse utilizes the school newsletter to publicize important health issues. There is ongoing communication between the special education staff, administrators, counselors, teachers, parents, and students. The library/information specialist provides communication to parents and the community through the school website; distributes interest surveys to students in advisory; and sends e-mail to faculty members about new acquisitions. (self-study, students, parents, teachers)

Student records are maintained in a confidential and secure manner consistent with federal and state law. Student cumulative records are kept locked in a vault in fireproof file cabinets.

Records pertinent to school counseling (course sign-ups, 4-year plans, etc.) are kept in fire-safe file cabinets in the school counseling office under the supervision of the registrar. Health records are kept in the health office in locked fire-safe files. Health records are backed up on the computer daily. Library/information circulation files are backed up daily. All records are backed up to an off-site server. As a result, the school is in compliance with associated laws regarding student confidentiality (FERPA, HIPPA). (self-study, standard subcommittee, facility tour)

There are sufficient certified/licensed personnel and support staff members to provide effective counseling, health, special education, and library media services. There are four school counselors who hold master's degrees, a full-time licensed social worker, a full-time certified school nurse, a physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, and a full-time certified media specialist. Windham High School employs nine full-time certified special education teachers. The school has support staff, including two full-time library educational technicians and twelve special education technicians. The school has a full-time resource officer and also has contracted services with a licensed alcohol and drug counselor. Meetings with staff members and expulsion data indicate a need for increasing the services of the substance abuse counselor to more than one day per week as some students are not having their needs met. School counselors report that they are expected to supervise lunch time, and, as a result some students report that they are not always able to access their school counselor for same day appointments. Discussions with student services staff members indicate that school counselors manage caseloads by alphabet. A school counseling director and 4/5 time school counselor manage a reduced case load of students (246 and 229), while the other two school counselors manage a larger case loads (276 and 266); thus, school counselors have caseloads that fall within the maximum recommend ratio of 300:1. As a result students are having their personal, career, and academic counseling needs met. (self-study, student work, standard committee, BAC, counselors)

The school provides a range of guidance services to students. The guidance curriculum is undergoing revision and implementation at the district level in accordance with the state's essential programs and services model. School counselors at Windham High School work with students individually and in small classroom groups to deliver guidance curriculum. School counselors address a variety of developmental needs for all students. Counselors work with first year students on transitioning to high school and developing a four-year academic plan. All sophomores attend a career fair, complete a career interest inventory, develop a portfolio, and attend tours of vocational/technical centers. Juniors and seniors work with counselors to develop college and post secondary plans. Counselors are trained in adolescent development and are trained specialists to address the personal/emotional needs of students. Counselors work with teachers and departments to assist students with course selection and consult with parents when appropriate regarding student placement. Counselors attend individual educational plans and student assistance team meetings. Counselors work collaboratively with community mental health agencies. There is a contracted Day One substance abuse counselor who is available for referrals at the school one day each week. Counselors keep a list of local agencies and counselors for the purposes of referrals and frequently assist families in the process of obtaining help in the community. All counselors and several teachers are trained in suicide prevention (Gatekeeper training) and conflict mediation. The absence of group counseling for emotional

issues prevents students from meeting all personal needs, however. (self-study, standard committee, parents, students)

Students and staff members depend on the caring, professional services of a full-time registered nurse who provides a complete range of health services including prevention, intervention, referrals, mandated services, emergency response, and ongoing health assessments. The health suite is located near the main office area and includes an office, a treatment room, and a private room for cot rest. Students take full advantage of the nurse's open door access to health services so the waiting room is a welcome addition. The nurse meets formally with guidance personnel and works cooperatively with the special education department to assist students. The nurse has a K-12 health database that is connected to the school database. She makes referrals to outside counselors and to physicians. Some classroom guest-speaking, CPR training, and many other health issues keep the nurse involved throughout the school. (support service staff, self-study, parents)

The library/information services program does not have a written curriculum and is not fully integrated into the school's curriculum and instructional program. The library/information specialist has no common planning time with core classroom teachers and does not have direct, ongoing communication about curriculum in all subject areas. There are no regular curriculum opportunities to reach all students with integrated information literacy skills through collaborative teaching between the library/information specialist and classroom teachers. Teachers and the library media specialist feel that the library media center is an under-utilized resource that, if fully utilized, could more positively impact both teaching and learning. (teachers, standards committee, BAC)

The library/information personnel do not have current or complete knowledge about Windham High School's curriculum. The library/media specialist is not on building or district curricular committees or BAC. Teacher requests for resources, class library research in specific curricular projects, and individual student inquiries provide much of the curricular information. The library media specialist uses her professional expertise in purchasing resources and in introducing them for individual or group use. However, there is an acknowledged need to combine a full curriculum with an integrated media program that offers all students a chance to learn the skills needed for success for their present and future needs. The absence of a library/information curriculum that is an integrated part of the school-wide curriculum deprives students of skills needed to succeed in all academic areas. (panel presentation, teachers, BAC, self-study)

The library/information specialist focuses collection building on selecting and purchasing a wide range of resources that support the curriculum. The specialist seeks input from the teaching staff about specific titles, videos, and/or resources to support specific projects. Several teachers submit reading lists for materials to be added to the collection. Regular collaborative teaching between the library media specialist and classroom teachers would greatly increase the utilization of media center resources to improve teaching and learning. A rich collection of resource materials is available to faculty members and students to improve teaching and learning. (teachers, self-study, standards committee)

Students and faculty and support staff members have regular access to media services and facilities. The library/information services personnel welcome individual students, small groups, and class groups to do research or other projects in the media center. Students frequently use the media center computers and the outstanding facility to study or free read. However, access is sometimes limited because the library/information specialist is required to monitor two study halls in the media center, and many students from other study halls often come with passes to the media center. The media center is occasionally used for testing. Access is available both before and after school. Some teachers ask the library/information specialist to teach bibliographic instruction in the media center classroom. The library/information specialist gave a well received orientation tour to all freshmen in the Freshmen Think Tank program this year. Follow-up with a book pass project and a goal-setting unit is planned for that new program. Some teachers sign up for class visits, but there is often very little common planning for collaborative teaching. Many teachers state that the library/information services personnel are always helpful in providing resources and assisting with specific resources. Since collaborative access to and utilization of library/information services is not an essential part of the instructional program both teaching and learning goals in this area are not met. (teachers, students, self-study)

The library/information specialist provides access to a wide-ranging collection of print and non-print resources, but individual inquiry is not fostered by instruction based on an integrated curriculum. The library provides 15 student computers that are heavily used throughout the day. Four LCD projectors, four carts providing twelve laptops each, and thirty-five TV/VCR/DVD carts are available for classroom use. At teacher request, the library/information specialist instructs students, introduces research approaches, and provides resources suited to areas of study. The students continue their research independently in the library over the course of several days. However, without a formal library media program that covers all aspects of information literacy, students can not develop expertise in independent inquiry. (students, teachers, self-study)

The District Instructional and Library Materials Selection Policy outlines objectives and criteria for selecting the wide range of materials chosen to “implement, enrich, and support” the curriculum of the Windham School system. The policy clearly outlines the process by which challenged materials are handled. Only one book challenge has been raised in recent years. Professional guidelines are followed for removing outdated, unused, or otherwise no longer valid resources. Student computer and Internet use rules are covered by a school committee approved policy and are included in the student handbook. Written policies guide the process to remove materials that do not meet approved criteria as well as addressing all issues regarding the inappropriate use of technology. (standard documents, teachers, students)

Windham High school provides a full range of special education services. Students are mainstreamed as much as possible. Services include a resource classroom, a behavior program, an autism program, a life skills program, and in-class support. Students may receive physical, occupational, and speech therapy as needed. Special education students work with the school social worker as needed. An additional social worker provides services for state agency clients. Teachers praise the knowledgeable special education staff and believe that its members provide excellent information regarding student needs. Several teachers referenced the outstanding in-class support services provided by educational technicians. There is pre-referral process for

early intervention and identification. The reorganization of the student assistance team may change the pre-referral process. Individual education plans are written to address specific needs, accommodations, and modifications. If the district is not able to provide appropriate services, outside educational placements are facilitated. The special education department adheres to all local, state, and federal laws. As a result of the full range of special education services offered at Windham High School, identified student needs are met. (self-study, BAC, support staff)

**Commendations:**

1. The wide range of student services available to assist students in achieving their goals
2. The communication between the student services team and the administration to support student success
3. The school counselors' active role in developing four year academic and career plans with students and parents
4. Strong communication links with parents established by school counselors
5. Active participation of the nurse throughout the whole school environment
6. The cooperation between the Freshmen Think Tank program and the library/information specialist
7. The outstanding in-class support and communication with teachers by the special education personnel

**Recommendations:**

1. Inform students of the full range of personal counseling services available through the school
2. Create small group counseling opportunities for students on personal/emotional issues
3. Create a plan for all school counselors to significantly increase student access
4. Increase the availability of the substance abuse counselor
5. Develop a formal library/information curriculum and implement its integration
6. Involve the library/information services specialist in the curriculum review cycle and integrated information literacy instruction
7. Involve classroom teachers in collaborative integration of library information instruction

## SUPPORT STANDARD

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# 7

### Community Resources for Learning

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

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

## CONCLUSIONS:

Windham High School offers parents opportunities to engage as partners in each student's education. Parents acknowledge that they are invited to participate in the many activities provided by the school. Examples of these activities include: an informational night for eighth grade students and their parents, an e-mail list serve, the school website, monthly newsletters, an annual open house, and twice yearly parent-teacher-student conferences. Some parents are informally contacted by teachers via e-mail or phone regarding the needs and progress of their students. Of particular note was the initiation of student-led parent teacher conferences which increased parent participation in conferences from 51% to 71%. The new conference format clearly embodies the mission statement's emphasis, "on personal and academic success." As a result of these efforts, parents report that they feel informed about events and student performances at Windham High School. (parents, self-study, teachers)

Windham High School parents have infrequent participation in decision-making regarding school programs, but a small number is actively involved in parent support groups. Parental involvement in school-based decision-making is not apparent. In interviews, parents reported significant involvement in parent support groups: athletic boosters, arts boosters, and the PTA. However, survey data indicates that only 26% of parents surveyed says they participate in parent support groups. Only 25% of school board members surveyed think there is an appropriate level of parental involvement in the school. As a result, parents report limited understanding of the rationale for decisions and few opportunities to provide input about school-wide areas of concern. (parents, leadership team, teachers, Endicott survey)

Windham High School sporadically fosters business/community/higher education partnerships that support student learning. Current opportunities for individual students include: the Co-Op Program, career day, the business simulation program, the early college program, students attending individual university classes, and job shadowing. These opportunities help in the fulfillment by individual students of the portions of the mission statement that read, "Our commitment to quality education emphasizes individualized learning experiences, challenging academics and varied opportunities for creative thinking and healthful risk-taking". There do not appear to be active partnerships with the four institutions of higher education within 20 minutes or less of the Windham High School Campus. Only 34% of parents surveyed is aware of existing business and community partnerships that support student learning. The district strategic plan goal three titled "Community-School Relationship and Resources" is focused on sustained relationships between the school and, "individuals, organizations, and businesses . . .to ensure a high quality educational experience for all learners." Two objectives focus on partnerships with the community and leadership and coordination of the volunteer program, but their implementation is not evident. As a result, a limited number of students is able to benefit from these partnerships. (teachers, self-study, central office administrators, Endicott survey)

The Windham High School site and plant provide outstanding support for and enhancement of all aspects of the educational program and support services for student learning. Windham High School operates in a new facility opened in 2004. The building provides excellent support for learning needs of the students including: adequate classroom space, adequate lab space, dedicated space for student services, facilities for visual and performing arts, athletic fields, etc.

According to the survey 78% of faculty members and 97% of parents report that the facility is conducive to education and learning. Additionally, the community committed over \$8 million dollars in local funding for the facility to enhance student learning. As a result, the students are educated in a state of the art facility that enhances their educational program and fully supports the school's mission. (Endicott survey, teachers, self-study)

The physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. An example of the school's commitment to compliance is the rapid resolution of problems brought to light by a Maine Department of Labor Inspection. Because the plant is in compliance, it supports the educational mission and expectations of the school. (self study, facilities director, principal)

Windham High School's equipment is adequate, properly maintained, catalogued, and replaced when appropriate. Most faculty members report that needed equipment is readily available through the budget development process. While certain people are specifically tasked, we saw no evidence (i.e. maintenance logs) of ongoing maintenance. An equipment inventory is maintained by library staff members. As a result, students have access to necessary equipment in most courses. (self-study, teachers, leadership team)

Windham High School has a well-planned and adequately funded program of building and site management. Examples include 13 full time custodians, up-to-date building management software, and the NEASC survey indicating that, 77% of students, 92% of staff members, and 97% of parents report that the school building and facilities are well maintained. Thus, Windham High School is exceptionally clean and well maintained. (support staff, teachers, parents, Endicott survey)

Other than facilities, technology, and the district capital reserve plan, there is no ongoing planning to address future programs, enrollment changes, and staffing. There is a five-year technology plan and a ten-year capital reserve plan for all facilities that received a new level of funding two years ago in the amount of \$300,000 which was increased last year to \$400,000. There is a district strategic plan developed in 2004 with input from all stakeholders. The school committee believes that this five-year plan addresses future needs. However, the goals of the strategic plan focus on curriculum, leadership, and partnerships and do not address future programs, enrollment changes, and staffing. As a result, no budget funds at the high school are used for staffing linked to increasing enrollments reducing funding for supplies, equipment, and technology. (school leaders, teachers, support staff, strategic plan)

The community and district ensure adequate funding and a dependable source of revenue to provide and maintain appropriate school programs, personnel, services, facilities, equipment, technological support, materials, and supplies for student learning. Evidence of funding include: history of budgets being supported by the community, staffing increases commensurate with enrollment increases, and funding of a literacy specialist for the high school. As a result, staff members report they have what they need. (teachers, self-study, school committee)

Windham High School faculty and administration have active involvement in the budgetary process, including its development and implementation. An example is department and building

level budget development and revision when necessary. The central office delegates budget formation to individual buildings district-wide. As a result, staff members generally feel engaged in the budget process and well supported by administration. (teachers, self-study, school committee)

**Commendations:**

1. Formal communications with parents and families regarding events
2. Parent participation through student-led conferences
3. Varied course and extracurricular opportunities for students
4. A facility that provides exceptional support for the educational program
5. Timely correction of department of labor instances of non-compliance
8. Purchase of maintenance software to track maintenance requests and costs over time
9. Creation of a ten year capital reserve plan
10. Funding of the capital reserve plan during the preceding two years
11. Community support for proposed school budgets
12. The commitment of over \$8 million dollars in local funding for the new facility

**Recommendations:**

1. More fully implement goal of the Windham School Department Strategic Plan titled “Community-School Relationship and Resources”
2. Continue to fund the maintenance and capital improvement plans
3. Develop a mission based five-year plan that responds to enrollment projections, staffing levels, and student-centered program needs

## FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

This comprehensive evaluation report reflects the findings of the school's self-study and those of the visiting committee. It provides a blueprint for the faculty, administration, and other officials to use to improve the quality of programs and services for the students in Windham High School. The faculty, school board, and superintendent should be apprised by the building administration yearly of progress made addressing visiting committee recommendations.

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

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

To ensure that it has current information about the school, the Commission has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Commission within sixty days (60) of occurrence any substantive change which negatively impacts the school's adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The report of substantive change must describe the change itself and detail any impact which the change has had on the school's ability to meet CPSS Standards. The Commission's Substantive Change Policy is included in the Appendix on page 55. All other substantive changes should be included in the Two- and Five-Year Progress Reports and/or the Annual Report which is required of each member school to ensure that the Commission office has current statistical data on the school.

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

**APPENDIX A**  
**Windham High School**  
**NEASC VISITING COMMITTEE**  
**October 14 - 17, 2007**

Martin Gray Chair	Central Middle School Corinth, ME 04427
Karen Mitchell Assistant Chair	English Department Head - Retired Fayette, ME 04349
Chris Beals	Sumner Memorial High School Sullivan, ME 04664
Jeanne Crocker	South Portland High School South Portland, ME 04106
Erin Flynn	Oxford Hills High School South Paris, Me 04281
Dennis Glidden	Nokomis Regional High School Newport, ME 04953
Kelly Glynn	Marshwood High School South Berwick, ME 03908
Holly Hancock	Limestone Community School Limestone, ME 04750
Donna Heal	Camden Hills High School Rockport, ME 04856
Margaret McNamee	Biddeford High School Biddeford, ME 04005
Jonathan Radtke	Falmouth High School Falmouth, ME 04105
Michael Walley	Hall-Dale High School Livermore Falls, ME 04254
Shannon Welsh	Union 30 Lisbon, ME 04252

## APPENDIX B

### NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

#### Commission on Public Secondary Schools

#### SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

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

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

