NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

REPORT OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE

Ware Junior/Senior High School

Ware, MA

September 27 – September 30, 2015

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STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS

**THE DISTRIBUTION, USE, AND SCOPE OF THE
VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**

The Committee on Public Secondary Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges considers this visiting committee report of Ware Junior/Senior High School to be a privileged document submitted by the Committee 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 Ware Junior/Senior High School in terms of the Committee'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 committee.

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INTRODUCTION

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

The governing body of the Association is its Board of Trustees which supervises the work of four Commissions: the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE), the Commission on Independent Schools (CIS), the Commission on Public Schools which is comprised of the Committee on Public Secondary Schools (CPSS), the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions (CTCI), and 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 Committee. Those Standards are:

> Teaching and Learning Standards
>> Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations
>> Curriculum
>> Instruction
>> Assessment of and for Student Learning
>
> Support of Teaching and Learning Standards
>> School Culture and Leadership
>> 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 Committee'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 Committee in the Follow-Up process. Continued accreditation requires that the school be reevaluated at least once every ten years and that it shows continued progress addressing identified needs.

Preparation for the Accreditation 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 Ware Junior/Senior High School, a committee of six 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. The self-study of Ware Junior/Senior High School extended over a period of 19 school months from September 2013 to May 2015. While some sections of the self-study were more detailed than others, the visiting committee appreciated all of the valuable information contained in the self-study and strongly considered the conclusions made by the school staff.

Public schools evaluated by the Committee 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 Committee, Ware Junior/Senior High School also used questionnaires developed by The Research Center 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 12 evaluators was assigned by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate the Ware Junior/Senior High School. The Committee members spent four days in Ware, 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 Committee's Standards for Accreditation. Since the evaluators represented public school teachers and building and central office administrators, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Ware Junior/Senior High School.

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

- review of the school's self-study materials

- 34 hours shadowing 12 students for a half day

- a total of 4 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 23 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 in the report was agreed to by visiting committee 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 visiting committee's judgment will be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning and to better meet Committee Standards.

This report of the findings of the visiting committee will be forwarded to the Committee on Public Secondary Schools which will make a decision on the accreditation of Ware Junior/Senior High School.

Ware Junior Senior High School
School and Community Profile

The Town of Ware is nationally known as "The Town That Can't Be Licked." Signs greet visitors to the community on Routes 32 and 9. According to *Images of America Ware, The Manour of Peace,* "in 1937 the owners of the Otis Company Mills decided to liquidate and townspeople rallied behind a plan to raise funds to purchase the mills. The phrase was coined by Police Chief Bartholomew W. Buckley and as a result, the Ware Industries Incorporated was organized in November 1937." As a result of this action, community members continued to take pride in overcoming obstacles. Geographically, Ware is bordered by Belchertown to the west; New Salem, Petersham, and Hardwick to the north; New Braintree, West Brookfield, and Warren to the east; and Palmer to the south. It is approximately equidistant from Springfield, Northampton, and Worcester by 25 miles. Boston is 67 miles to the east, and Ware is 163 miles to New York City.

The unified campus of the Ware Public Schools is located on Route 32 approximately one mile from the center of Ware. The campus consists of one elementary school, Stanley M. Koziol Elementary School (SMK); one middle school, Ware Middle School (WMS); and one junior/senior high school, Ware Junior Senior High School (WJSHS). The student population of SMK is 424, of WMS is 316, and of WJSHS is 466 students for the 2014-2015 school year. Grades preschool through grade 3 are found at SMK, WMS houses grades 4 through 6, and WJSHS encompasses grades 7 through 12. Eighty-six of the students at WJSHS receive special education services.

The average daily student attendance at WJSHS in 2013-2014 was 93% and teacher attendance was 97% in 2013-2014. The range in class size for grades 9 through 12 is 8 to 34 students. The average class size for grades 7 and 8 is 25 students. The Structured Learning Center (SLC) enrollment ranges from 2 to 16 students.

In 2013-2014, 60 students graduated. Of these, 52% of WJSHS students attended four-year colleges; 29% attended community college; 9% entered the military; 0% entered a trade or technical school; 10% entered the workforce. The graduation requirement is 28 credits. The four-year graduation rate for 2014 (of the 86 students in cohort) was 72.1% graduated, 16.3% still in school, 4.7% completed their G.E.D, and 7.0% dropped out.

Ware's population is approximately 10,000 residents. As of the 2010 census, 86.8% are Caucasian and the remaining 13.2% include African American, Asian, Hispanic, Native American and other (multi race, non-Hispanic). The median household income of residents is $50,467. The percentage of children attending WJSHS reported to be receiving free and reduced lunch is 55.9% as of October 2014.

At one time, mills employed most of the community. Most of the mills have now closed and today, Kanzaki Paper Company, Baystate Mary Lane Hospital and WalMart are the largest employers in Ware. Most Ware residents are employed in retail, service industries, or manufacturing.

For the 2013-2014 school year, the WJSHS per pupil expenditure was $11,919.00 compared to the state average of $13,636.00. The town contributed 45% of the school budget during the 2013-2014 school year. The remaining money allocated by state and federal funding was 55%.

As of October 1, 2014, WJSHS employs 35 full-time and one part-time teacher, two administrators, one librarian, two guidance counselors, one adjustment counselor, one school psychologist, three full-time secretaries, one full-time nurse, four custodians, three LPNs, and twelve paraprofessionals. All students

at WJSHS receive six hours of instructional time per day for 180 days per year. Teachers are committed by contract to 185 days per year.

Over the years, WJSHS has worked to develop both formal and informal productive business and community partnerships which support student learning. Partnerships include Girls' Eye View, Ware Domestic Violence Task Force, The Carson Center for Human Services, Country Bank for Savings (Credit for Life Fair), and Baystate Mary Lane Hospital (Community Health Initiative).

Connections have also been made with a number of local businesses in the area to allow students opportunities to participate in internships (Ware Police, Wickabog Veterinary Clinic, and Baystate Mary Lane Hospital).   These internships have given students valuable career experience.

 WJSHS has many recognition programs for students, including the Student Council (grades 9-12), Leadership Council (grades 7 and 8), National Honor Society, National Arts Honor Society, National Junior Honor Society, Parent Teacher Student Spirit Association grades 9-12 (PTSSA), and Jr. PTSSA grades 7-8.

Ware Junior/Senior High School Mission Statement

Ware Junior Senior High School provides a safe, supportive environment of high expectations and mutual respect in which students are able to achieve academic success and develop into responsible, self-sufficient participants in a global society.

Beliefs About Learning

- ❖ Students are expected to attend school every day, and will take responsibility for their education by remaining actively engaged in the learning process.
- ❖ Students will regularly challenge themselves and persevere while acquiring new skills and concepts.
- ❖ Students will make connections between academic pursuits and real world applications.
- ❖ Students will demonstrate consideration for self, others, and the school environment.
- ❖ Students will demonstrate skillful application of media and technology for use in the 21st century.
- ❖ Students will communicate effectively through verbal, non-verbal, written and artistic forms.

(Approved by the Ware Junior Senior High School Faculty on October 7, 2014.)

Student Expectations at Ware Junior Senior High School

Academic Expectations

Ware Junior Senior High School Students Will:
Read, write, and compute effectively
Listen and speak effectively
Demonstrate problem-solving skills
Use appropriate technological tools and skills
Express ideas through the arts and humanities

Social Expectations

Ware Junior Senior High School Students Will:
Demonstrate respect for self, others, and our environment
Take responsibility for their behavior and education
Accept the consequences of their actions
Abide by school and societal boundaries

Civic Expectations

Ware High School Students Will:
Attend school regularly and participate in their education
Develop knowledge and skills to become active citizens
Develop an awareness of diverse cultures, societies, and ways of life

COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

TEACHING AND LEARNING
STANDARDS

CORE VALUES, BELIEFS, AND LEARNING
EXPECTATIONS

CURRICULUM

INSTRUCTION

ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT
LEARNING

| 1 | **Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations** |

Effective schools identify core values and beliefs about learning that function as explicit foundational commitments to students and the community. Decision-making remains focused on and aligned with these critical commitments. Core values and beliefs manifest themselves in research-based, school-wide 21st century learning expectations. Every component of the school is driven by the core values and beliefs and supports all students' achievement of the school's learning expectations.

1. The school community engages in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research-based best practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning.

2. The school has challenging and measurable 21st century learning expectations for all students which address academic, social, and civic competencies, and are defined by school-wide analytic rubrics that identify targeted high levels of achievement.

3. The school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school, drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom, and guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations.

4. The school regularly reviews and revises its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, as well as district and school community priorities.

Conclusions

Ware Junior Senior High School (WJSHS) engages in a somewhat collaborative and inclusive process to identify, revise, and commit to its core values, beliefs and 21st century learning expectations. The recent revision by the school's leadership team and five faculty members followed several efforts to review the mission statement drafted right before the 2005 accreditation visit. In September 2013, the principal designated a faculty meeting for staff members to discuss and revise the school's core values and beliefs about learning. In August 2014, the principal organized a "block party" in an effort to solicit feedback from stakeholders on the core values and beliefs about learning. Using a district-designed survey, faculty, parent, and student feedback was solicited to gather input on a variety of topics that included the school's core values, beliefs and 21st century learning expectations. The results were shared with staff members with the goal of using them to improve upon current practices. The core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations are posted on the walls of individual classrooms and all members of the school community can view them on the homepage of the school's website. While the process to identify, revise, and commit to the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations was somewhat inclusive, the principal recognizes that the process needs to be more inclusive and systematic. In the Two-Year Targeted Plan the school committed to the establishment of an inclusive and collaborative process to use professional meeting time to re-examine the school's mission statement, beliefs, core values, the school's academic, social and civic expectations and to revise the school-wide analytic rubrics and thereby to ensure that the entire school community has a shared sense of ownership of the statement of core values, beliefs and 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, Endicott survey, in-school surveys, classroom observations, panel presentation, teachers, school leaders, WJSHS Two-Year Targeted plan)

WJSHS has identified measureable and somewhat challenging 21st century learning expectations for students that address academic, social and civic expectations and are defined by school-wide analytic rubrics that identify targeted levels of achievement. Although the WJSHS learning expectations reflect some commonly identified 21st century skills regarding communication, problem solving, civic engagement, and technology, they do not reflect much of the current research that includes a broader range of 21st century learning skills such as creative and critical thinking, entrepreneurship, analysis and synthesis of data and information, social-emotional learning, systems thinking, global citizenship, and collaboration/teamwork. School-wide analytic rubrics are currently being reviewed for full implementation, and many teachers across the school are already using common writing rubrics. These rubrics are designed to measure student progress in skills such as reading, writing, and computing effectively, listening and speaking effectively, demonstrating problem solving skills, being able to use technology effectively and ethically, and expressing ideas through arts and humanities. The rubrics for the school's social and civic learning expectations measure student respect for self and others, the ability to accept responsibility for one's own behavior and education, engagement in the school as measured by attendance at school and in classes, the development of skills to engage as active citizens, and the ability to appreciate diversity. Students are rated on a five-point scale with a range of scores from "exceeds all standards" to "no attempt made." However, it is not clear how the current targeted levels of achievement are calibrated and, while the learning expectations align with the core values and beliefs about learning, it is unclear how the school-wide analytic rubrics will be used to inform the process of ensuring that all students will be able to achieve these expectations. Furthermore, while most parents and students indicate that they are familiar with the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations, data regarding both individual and school-wide achievement of these expectations are not compiled nor are they communicated to faculty, parents, and students, although the school's Targeted Two-and Five-Year Plans address these issues. The full implementation of the school-wide analytic rubrics will enable WJSHS to effectively measure student achievement of academic, social, and civic expectations in a manner that is clear and consistent to all stakeholders and thereby will help ensure that all students are provided with sufficient opportunities to meet with success in achieving the 21st century learning

expectations. (self-study, classroom observations, panel presentation, student work, student shadowing, teachers, parents, students, school leaders, WJSHS Two- and Five-Year Targeted Plans)

The school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school, somewhat drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in many classrooms, and play a role in guiding the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations. The core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations are displayed in every classroom and 82 percent of students are familiar with the learning expectations of the school. Furthermore, 74 percent of faculty members believe that the school's core values and beliefs are reflected in the school culture. The advisory program, the wide range of extracurricular activities, the faithful implementation of the Collins Writing System across the school, the school-wide use of the *Understanding by Design* curriculum model, and the Learning Experience Academic Preparation (LEAP) program are all examples of how the core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations reflect the school culture. Conversations with students corroborate the commitment of most staff members to meet individual student needs and the respect students have for their teachers, the Ware community, and each other. On the other hand, the 21st century learning expectations are only peripherally integrated into the school's curriculum and the school does not measure and report individual and school-wide achievement of the academic, civic, and social expectations of the school. Only 70 percent of faculty members report that they consider the core values and beliefs about learning when making instructional decisions. The principal has placed a greater focus on having the core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations play a greater role in setting priorities and making decisions and has clearly incorporated them in the design of the school's Two- and Five-Year Targeted Plans, but at this point they are not the driving force across the school in the decision-making process at both the classroom and the school level. When the beliefs, core values, and learning expectations drive all programmatic and educational decision-making and play the central role in informing curriculum changes and the improvement of instructional and assessment practices, the likelihood that all students experience equitable opportunities to achieve success and mastery of the 21st century learning expectations will be maximized. (self-study, Endicott survey, in-school survey, classroom observations, panel presentation, school statement of mission and beliefs, student work, student shadowing, students, teachers, Core Values Standard Subcommittee, central office personnel, building administrators)

The school often reviews and revises its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations based on district and school priorities but not on research and multiple data sources. The school revised its mission statement and learning expectations before the NEASC accreditation visit of 2005 and has since revisited them several times and recently engaged in a formal process to redefine its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations. The school did incorporate the use of data from a school-designed survey using Survey Monkey into this process but does not yet employ a formal process to collect, analyze, aggregate and disseminate individual or school-wide achievement data that could provide valuable information for any effort to review these documents. The school's Two- and Five-Year Targeted Plans recognize the need to have a process in place to ensure that the school will be able to use achievement data based on the use of school-wide rubrics to make programmatic changes. Also, there is no evidence that the current research on 21st century learning expectations is used to inform the review process. When current research is reviewed and both individual and school-wide achievement data are used to inform all reviews of the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations, the review process will produce a document that can best fit the educational needs of all WJSHS students. (self-study, panel presentation, school leaders, Core Values Standard Subcommittee, Two- and Five-Year Targeted Plans)

Commendations:

1. The solicitation of feedback from all stakeholders to create an inclusive statement of the school's core values and beliefs
2. The strong commitment of teachers and students to the spirit of the school's core values
3. The implementation of programs such as the advisory program, Collins Writing System and LEAP program as reflective of WJSHS core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations as they inform the school culture
4. The school's efforts to create and review analytic rubrics for each of the school's academic, civic, and social learning expectations

Recommendations:

1. Ensure that the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in all classrooms and guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations
2. Develop and implement a dynamic process to review and revise the school's statement of core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations that is informed by multiple data sources including the achievement of the school's learning expectations and by current research on 21st century learning expectations
3. Communicate to all stakeholders the role of the school-wide analytic rubrics and indicate how and when they are used to measure targeted student achievement outcomes

Teaching and Learning Standard

2   Curriculum

The written and taught curriculum is designed to result in all students achieving the school's 21st century expectations for student learning. The written curriculum is the framework within which a school aligns and personalizes the school's 21st century learning expectations. The curriculum includes a purposefully designed set of course offerings, co-curricular programs, and other learning opportunities. The curriculum reflects the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The curriculum is collaboratively developed, implemented, reviewed, and revised based on analysis of student performance and current research.

1. The curriculum is purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

2. The curriculum is written in a common format that includes:
   - units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills
   - the school's 21st century learning expectations
   - instructional strategies
   - assessment practices that include the use of school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics.

3. The curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through:
   - inquiry and problem-solving
   - higher order thinking
   - cross-disciplinary learning
   - authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school
   - informed and ethical use of technology.

4. There is clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum.

5. Effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation exist between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district.

6. Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are sufficient to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities.

7. The district provides the school's professional staff with sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research.

Conclusions

Ware Junior Senior High School (WJSHS) is making progress toward creating a purposely designed curriculum to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations. For example, the school learned during the self-study process that the majority of teachers did not know which 21st century learning expectations they were responsible for, so since then the school has revised its 21st century learning expectations and has identified in writing which departments will be responsible for each learning expectation. During professional development time provided at the beginning of the 2015-16 school year, teachers were able to review the school's academic, social, and civic expectations and began the process of making these expectations a part of their academic reporting. However, the 21st century learning expectations are not universally understood by faculty members and are not clearly spelled out in curriculum documents, although they are sometimes included informally in teachers' unit plans, assessments, and lessons. By completing a purposefully designed curriculum using data and the adopted *Understanding by Design* (*UbD*) model that incorporates the school's 21st century learning skills into the curriculum documents, teachers can clearly understand and communicate the connections between course content and the academic expectations of the school. (self-study, teacher interviews, curriculum documents, student shadowing)

The curriculum is written in a common format that includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, skills, but the documents do not clearly identify the school's 21st century learning expectations in all curricular areas or in all units of study, and the documents in general do not identify appropriate instructional strategies for teaching specific essential questions or important content, and, while they sometimes identify assessment practices, these practices do not include the use of school-wide analytic rubrics and course-specific rubrics. The school has adopted the *UbD* model to be used across all departments for the creation of curricular overviews and maps which clearly identify essential questions, content, and skills. The mathematics and English language arts (ELA) curriculum documents were updated in 2013, and teachers in these departments were given time and resources to develop more specific curriculum lessons using the *Understanding by Design* model. These documents intentionally include language that identifies 21st century learning expectations to be addressed, but do not consistently identify common course-specific assessment practices and more specifically the use of school-wide analytic rubrics to measure achievement of the 21st century learning expectations. In other curricular areas, the curriculum documents are outdated and require both time and resources for major updates and revisions that will clearly articulate current best practices in all courses and will reflect the school's commitment to state standards, 21st century learning expectations, and the use of school-wide analytic rubrics. The school recognizes the need to review its curricular offerings to align them with its mission and beliefs about learning and its academic, social, and civic expectations and to write the necessary curriculum revisions into its Five-Year Plan. Meanwhile, many teachers have created course-specific unit plans using the *UbD* model, and the school's professional staff used a professional development day provided at the beginning of the current school year to review the current school-wide rubrics and to plan their integration into the school's instruction and assessment practices. By reviewing and revising its curricular documents to include 21st century learning expectations, recommended instructional practice, and assessment practices that include the use of school-wide analytic rubrics, the school will be able to provide teachers with an invaluable tool to guide instruction and assessment that is aligned to the school's core values and beliefs. (self-study, curriculum documents, Curriculum Standard Subcommittee)

The written curriculum at WJSHS inconsistently emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through inquiry and problem solving, higher order thinking skills, cross-disciplinary learning, and authentic learning opportunities; however, informed and ethical use of technology is explicitly emphasized. Depth of understanding and application of knowledge are not consistently

articulated in the curriculum documents. Through recent curricular revision, the math and English departments have created new, state-standards-aligned curriculum maps that clearly articulate a commitment to higher order thinking, inquiry, problem solving, and authentic learning.   As a result, there are some content areas containing units of study that clearly identify activities emphasizing depth of understanding and application of knowledge through inquiry and problem solving and higher order thinking skills as indicated by the presence of verbs such as "evaluate," "compare and contrast," and "predict" that require higher order thinking. The written curriculum documents from areas other than math and English, however, often contain clear content goals but lack a consistent articulation of goals and activities that promote higher order thinking and authentic learning.   In addition, these documents frequently replace essential questions with content goals or ignore essential questions altogether. Some assessments referenced in the curriculum documents, such as analyzing a fictional psychiatric patient or designing original media productions, clearly indicate an emphasis on higher order thinking. However, the written curriculum is dominated by the frequent use of lower order thinking verbs such as "identify," "describe," and "explain," and some curriculum documents focus on the acquisition of information and only incorporate depth of understanding or application of knowledge in an ancillary way.   In addition, although not always clearly articulated in the curriculum documents, teachers often move beyond the written curriculum to engage students in inquiry and higher order thinking. For example, samples of student work indicate that students are asked to create writing pieces that demonstrated creativity, attention to detail, and an ability to synthesize their own thinking with tropes and ideas from the literature they studied. Students are also challenged to represent abstract ideas like the seven deadly sins through both poetic and visual interpretation and to demonstrate inquiry learning through the creation of detailed lab reports. Interviews with teachers reveal an emphasis on higher order thinking skills through activities such as seminar discussions, debates, and creation of original hypotheses. Survey data indicates that 68 percent of students believe that "the content of the course I take challenges me to think critically and solve problems."   In addition, some of the curriculum documents contain misplaced or incomplete information. Opportunities for interdisciplinary learning are not described in the curricular documents and teachers acknowledge that very little interdisciplinary curricular planning takes place. However, the survey data states that 71 percent of students feel that the information they learn in one class could be used in other classes, and student work samples include some interdisciplinary projects such as a project in which students created poetry, art, and other artifacts related to a fictional Roman rock band. The Endicott survey also indicates that 61 percent of students believe that their teachers explain how to apply what they are learning in their classes to learning experiences in other classes and life outside the curriculum. A variety of authentic learning opportunities are available to students at WJSHS, including advisory programs and student groups that promote a safe community by participating in a walk against domestic violence, participating in a blood drive, soliciting donations through a letter-writing program to finance the 8th grade Washington DC trip, participating in town parades with the school band, participating on an "As Schools Match Wits" team, attending town meetings by civics classes, and engaging in various internship opportunities. The Learning Experience Academic Preparation Program (LEAP) for special needs students runs a model small food delivery business within the school and makes use of internships at Big Y and Dave's Soda and Pet Food City. This emphasis on authentic learning is reflected in the recently revised mathematics curriculum, which makes frequent references to real-world problem solving, and the ELA curriculum, which emphasizes original thinking and analysis. However, curriculum documents from areas outside of English and math infrequently refer to authentic learning opportunities. On the other hand, the informed and ethical use of technology is strongly emphasized in the curriculum. One of WJSHS's school-wide academic expectations is that "WJSHS students will use appropriate technological tools and skills." The school requires an acceptable use of technology form that must be signed by parents and students in order for students to be allowed to access school computers, and a computer-based course that includes explicit instruction in the ethical use of technology is a graduation requirement. WJSHS offers

online courses and online supports for students and projects incorporating technology such as word processing, Internet research, movie making, and PowerPoint presentations are common throughout the curriculum. The school's recent efforts to revise the mathematics and ELA curricula over the past six years have clearly increased the emphasis on depth of understanding and application of knowledge in those subject areas, and as the school continues to revise curriculum documents, the expectation is that all students will be engaged in thinking critically and applying what they have learned across the curriculum. A comprehensive curriculum that includes a focus on depth of understanding, inquiry and problem solving, higher order thinking, opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning, and authentic learning ensures experiences for students ensures that students have opportunities to practice and achieve the 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, Endicott survey, in-school survey, teacher interviews, teachers, curriculum documents, students, student work)

There is some alignment between the written and taught curriculum at WJSHS. Many teachers at the school report using their curriculum documents to guide lesson and assessment planning, while other teachers report that they deviate regularly from the written curriculum. Department heads report that they would like to do more curriculum monitoring, but because they teach a full load they do not have enough time for non-evaluative observations and walk-throughs in order to ensure that the taught curriculum is aligned with written curriculum. The absence of common planning time inhibits any formal collaboration between teachers responsible for teaching the same courses, thus contributing to situations in which two classes with the same written curriculum are not aligned. In addition, frequent changes in staffing in some departments result in course content changing from year to year, and, in many cases, the current written curriculum is flexible enough that different teachers might use the same document to create very different classroom experiences related to the number and type of resources, instructional techniques, and/or methods of assessment. Even in cases in which there is more consistency between the written and taught curriculum, teachers do not have allocated time to develop common standards for evaluation of student work such as common assessments and rubrics that provide a means to ensure a better match between the taught and written curricula, and a school culture that has long-valued teacher autonomy makes it especially challenging to ensure a consistent standard of alignment between curriculum and actual practice. The principal has begun an accountability process that requires teachers to prepare lesson plans and learning goals when they are formally observed and requires that teachers bring student work to monthly department meetings to initiate conversations that include discussions of curriculum goals and implementation. However, neither of these processes is sufficient to ensure universal alignment between written and taught curriculum. Strengthening accountability for alignment between written and taught curriculum will ensure that all students at WJSHS will experience the same purposefully designed curriculum and thereby maximize opportunities for them to receive instruction aligned to school-wide and course-specific learning expectations. (self-study, teacher interviews, Endicott survey, in-school survey, student shadowing, Curriculum Standard Subcommittee, school leadership)

Curricular coordination and vertical articulation exist only minimally between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district. WJSHS does not yet have a clearly identified curriculum review and revision cycle in which teachers are able to collaborate to establish coherence across curriculum documents and does not provide regular formal time for coordination of curriculum between or among departments or between sending schools and WJSHS. While occasionally checks on vertical and horizontal alignment within each department take place informally during lunch or more formally during department meetings, the curriculum is not subject to regular evaluation to ensure curricular coordination, nor is time devoted to collaboration opportunities across content areas. Rather, alignment is ostensibly maintained through the use of established written curriculum as a starting point in determining the instructional practices, assessments, and resources to be used in any given course. These curriculum documents are designed to be vertically integrated but are, in many

cases, out of date or not fully aligned to ensure proper coherence and focus. Efforts are being made to establish some vertical alignment opportunities between 7th and 8th grade, but these conversations are usually devoted to student placement concerns.   The Ware Public School District does employ a consultant to serve as the part-time curriculum and professional development coordinator, who would like to provide opportunities for vertical and horizontal curriculum alignment but faces the daunting challenge of accomplishing this without the needed allocation of time and personnel. Teachers describe coordination between departments and sending schools as "minimal to non-existent," and structures such as professional learning communities (PLCs) do not currently operate within the school. At the end of the school year, the 7th grade team (including core teachers, special education teachers, and a guidance counselor) meets with a corresponding team of 6th grade educators from Ware Middle School to discuss incoming students and, because WJSHS has a large number of transient students, informal processes have been established by teachers and guidance counselors to help these students transition to WJSHS. By establishing formal processes for curricular revision that include effective curricular coordination and vertical alignment, the school will be able to better provide a coherent curriculum across grade levels and subject areas that gives all students ample opportunities to achieve the school's learning expectations. (self-study, curriculum documents, Curriculum Standard Subcommittee, teachers, guidance counselors, building administrators, central office personnel)

Facilities, supplies, and the resources of the library/media center are sufficient but staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, and equipment are not sufficient to implement the full curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. While most teachers agree that the school facilities are sufficient to deliver a comprehensive curriculum, and department heads generally express satisfaction with the availability of instructional supplies, staff members are much less apt to agree that other necessary resources are available to support the implementation of the school's curriculum. Only 22 percent of teachers agree that staffing levels are sufficient and only about 40 percent agrees that instructional materials and technology are sufficient to implement the curriculum. Class size data indicate that for the past two years the average class size was between 18 and 19 students, and classroom observations suggest in very few classes an excessive number of students impede student learning, thus casting some doubt on teacher claims of insufficient staffing. It is more likely that concerns about staffing are related instead to the fact that so few elective courses are offered at WJSHS and that a number of cuts have been made over the past few years that have curbed the number of offerings and, additionally, some courses such as core history classes and French have also been cut. The sole world language offered at WJSHS is Spanish, and Spanish teachers report that instructional supplies and technology are inadequate to employ modernized instruction techniques to teach a world language. Recent expenditures, including updating technology resources, re-instating the CAD lab, and hiring new ELA and world language teachers at the 7th grade level demonstrate that the school is willing to make sacrifices in some areas in order to strengthen others. Technology at WJSHS is being improved year-to-year under the current administration in order to address existing technological needs, but the school's infrastructure (especially the inadequate wireless network) must be improved to support the use of technology in all areas of the school facility. On the other hand, school facilities are clean and attractive, classrooms are easily large enough to allow for a variety of student configurations, and the library is well-supplied with print and non-print resources and employs a full-time librarian. Adequate funding supports learning opportunities such as online courses, athletics, a music program, and a progressive and diverse advisory program. Some programs do require additional resources; for example, the athletics program uses a pay-to-play model in which student athletes must pay the school $100 to participate in a single sport and receives considerable funding through a booster organization to supplement its inadequate budget. The school's music program also engages in regular fundraising to meet the needs of the program. Many teachers express a desire to improve and modernize their resources through the acquisition of SMARTBoards, document cameras, and graphing calculators and to find technological solutions designed to help students access academic literature at home. By continuing to

make targeted improvements to instructional materials, technology, and equipment while ensuring adequate staffing to expand curriculum offerings, the school will be able to increase the number of ways it can support all students in meeting its 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, facility tour, student shadowing, Curriculum Standard Subcommittee, Endicott survey, in-school surveys, teachers, department heads)

The district provides the school's professional staff with limited personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research. The district has made progress in this area in the past few years. During the 2011-2012 school year, a part-time professional development and curriculum coordinator position was created to at least partially fill the void left when the position of curriculum coordinator was eliminated in 2007. Although this position has been assigned the responsibility for creating and implementing a new curriculum in math and English/language arts throughout the district, its scope is limited by the fact that the person occupying this is contracted for only 15 hours per week and only for the duration of the school year. The district's most recent curriculum revisions were accomplished during the summers of 2012 (mathematics) and 2013 (ELA), when the curriculum coordinator was on summer leave. Furthermore, there is some confusion about who is ultimately responsible for the review of curriculum at WJSHS, and no plan is set in place that clearly articulates a process or timeline to address the need for ongoing curriculum revision in all discipline areas, especially those that have not had recent curricular work. No time is built into the district calendar specifically designated for members of the professional staff to work on curriculum coordination and articulation. Teachers are given four half days to collaborate professionally outside of the monthly faculty and department meetings, and they may be used for curriculum work or for other purposes. Many teachers have received professional training on how to create clearly written curriculum documents in the *Understanding by Design* format adopted by the district. Many instances are evident in which staff members have independently and voluntarily contributed time to engage in curriculum writing in different curriculum areas, and many members of the teaching staff have expressed the desire to work on curriculum work and revision if given adequate time and the financial resources to get the job done. Based on data from an in-school survey, when asked if the district adequately provided the conditions needed for curriculum review and revision, 72 percent of WJSHS teachers responded "no" for personnel, 75 percent replied "no" for time, and 78 percent replied "no" for financial resources. Faculty members also express the desire for more leadership in this area and cite the need for a full-time curriculum coordinator to assist in this process. The school does not have a regular curriculum review cycle in place. At present, there is no consistent process for data collection and evaluation other than data from MCAS, AP testing, and WIDA Access and no provision is in place to include current research to inform the curriculum revision process. By providing the school's professional staff with sufficient time, personnel, and financial resources to engage in meaningful and regular curricular analysis, development, and revision that is informed by a variety of data sources and by current research and is guided by the leadership needed to ensure curriculum coherence and focus, the school will be able to provide an up-to-date, clearly articulated curriculum that drives quality instruction and provides all students with the opportunity to achieve both school-wide and subject-specific learning expectations. (self-study, teacher interviews, Curriculum Standard Subcommittee, building administration, central office personnel, teachers, in-school survey)

Commendations:
1. The use of a common format for curriculum that includes essential questions as well as content and skills
2. The authentic learning opportunities provided by the advisory, LEAP, and co-curricular programs

3. The curriculum improvements made in the mathematics and ELA curricula as a result of recent curriculum revisions
4. The provisions made to ensure that all students are well-versed in the ethical use of technology
5. The willingness of some teachers to voluntarily take on the task of performing necessary curriculum revisions in the absence of sufficient time and resources

Recommendations:

1. Integrate the school's 21st century learning expectations into the curriculum documents in all subject areas
2. Design and implement a curriculum revision cycle that includes a thorough and consistent process for curricular analysis, development, and revision and provide for the time, personnel, and financial resources to adequately support this process
3. Include instructional strategies and assessment strategies that include the use of school-wide rubrics in all curriculum documents
4. Ensure that curriculum documents in all subject areas emphasize higher order thinking, depth of understanding, and application of knowledge through inquiry and problem solving
5. Include more opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration in the curriculum
6. Provide sufficient staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, and equipment to implement the full curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities
7. Provide the leadership in curriculum development necessary to ensure that curricular coordination and vertical articulation exist between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district

3 **Instruction**

The quality of instruction is the single most important factor in students' achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Instruction is responsive to student needs, deliberate in its design and delivery, and grounded in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. Instruction is supported by research in best practices. Teachers are reflective and collaborative about their instructional strategies and collaborative with their colleagues to improve student learning.

1. Teachers' instructional practices are continuously examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations.

2. Teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by:
   - personalizing instruction
   - engaging students in cross-disciplinary learning
   - engaging students as active and self-directed learners
   - emphasizing inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking
   - applying knowledge and skills to authentic tasks
   - engaging students in self-assessment and reflection
   - integrating technology.

3. Teachers adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by:
   - using formative assessment, especially during instructional time
   - strategically differentiating
   - purposefully organizing group learning activities
   - providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom.

4. Teachers, individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices by:
   - using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments
   - examining student work
   - using feedback from a variety of sources, including students, other teachers, supervisors, and parents
   - examining current research
   - engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice.

5. Teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices.

Conclusions

Teachers' instructional practices are informally examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations. Although Ware Junior Senior High School (WJSHS) has not developed a formal process in which all teachers regularly examine their instructional practices, many teachers state that they often refer to the learning expectations posted in their classrooms to guide both creating lessons and planning instruction. Teachers frequently help each other through formal and informal conversations and exchanges of practices and ideas and sometimes through peer observation. All second year teachers are expected to participate in non-evaluative peer observations that provide them the opportunity to elicit and receive feedback from their peers in order to improve their instructional practices, and department heads occasionally perform non-evaluative peer observations for department members when their busy schedules afford them the time. Departments often discuss instructional strategies as part of their monthly department meetings and sometimes during monthly faculty meetings, and the school's Two-Year Plan calls for increasing the use of faculty and department meeting time for department-specific or grade-level professional collaboration. This year there are four early dismissal days set aside to engage all faculty members in conversations about teaching and learning. The high school science teachers regularly engage in professional conversations during their lunch period, and many teachers engage in reflective practices to improve future instruction. In some classes, projects and lesson plans have been adjusted and improved based on student performance and some teachers incorporate the *Understanding by Design* (*UbD*) template to drive and modify instruction based on student performance. When all teachers continuously reflect on their teaching through the lens of the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations, they will develop and implement instructional practices that are most effective in supporting student achievement. (self-study, classroom observations, teacher interview, student work, department leaders, teachers, central office personnel, Instruction Standard Subcommittee, Two-year Plan, principal)

Teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by sometimes personalizing instruction, occasionally engaging students in cross-disciplinary learning, frequently engaging students as active and self-directed learners, sometimes emphasizing inquiry, problem solving, higher order thinking, and application of knowledge and skills to authentic tasks, frequently engaging students in self-assessment and reflection, and sometimes using technology in instruction. Forty-nine percent of students feel that their teachers give them opportunities to choose topics for some assignments. One way in which teachers personalize instruction is by assigning projects that provide students with choices either related to the specific topic or to the mode of project presentation. Classroom observations indicate that personalization of learning occurs in about one-half of the classes on any given day. For example, in a social studies class students designed postcards written to family members from a region in East Africa that they were studying, in a finance class the teacher created scenarios related to specific students or to individual student interests, and in a Spanish class students used recently acquired vocabulary to provide a written description of their families. Teachers follow 504 Plans and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) to ensure students receive instruction that is designed specifically for that student. Opportunities also exist to engage students in cross-disciplinary learning. Several projects in the math and science departments demonstrate applied learning across the two disciplines; eighth grade teachers organized a snowflake lesson that incorporated math, science, English language arts (ELA), and history; and the John Collins Writing System has been incorporated with fidelity throughout all curricular areas. Teachers rarely collaborate across departments to plan interdisciplinary activities, but about two-thirds of faculty members report that at least sometimes engage students in cross-disciplinary learning. Students were actively engaged in 64 percent of observed classes. Seventh grade ELA students regularly participate in cooperative learning activities such as "Treasure Hunt," in which students pair up with other students in the class, create sentences for vocabulary words, initial each other's papers, and continue until all of the words have sentences. In art

classes, students participate in self-directed projects such as painting, sculpture, and works in other mediums. Active engagement occurs frequently in science classes in which students make hypotheses, carry out experimentation, and draw conclusions to support or refute their hypotheses. Manipulatives and geometric shapes are used in math classes to engage students in self-directed learning. In an in-school survey, 71 percent of teachers report engaging students in problem solving and/or higher order thinking at least weekly, and the level of cognitive demand was moderately to very high in 44 percent of classes observed. Examples of problem solving and higher order thinking across the school include comparing and contrasting as exemplified in the "Day of the Dead" Spanish project, the world history castle project, the many science labs that engage students in the inquiry process, the "divine proportion" art activity, and the use of Socratic seminars in literature classes. About 58 percent of teachers at WJSHS report that they ask students to apply their knowledge and skills to authentic learning tasks at least weekly and a similar percentage of students indicate that they have opportunities to apply their learning outside the classroom. The eighth grade students have written letters trying to secure funds for their first-ever trip to Washington DC from a nearby town's savings bank, the social studies department ran a regional mock election, and a science class has students design a catapult to solve an authentic problem using the engineering design process. Currently, 14 students participate in student internships in the building and, additionally, opportunities exist for an externship with the Ware Police Department and two externships are in place with the Baystate Mary Lane Hospital. Most courses ask students to reflect and self-assess frequently, and 70 percent of students believe that teachers provide them with opportunities to assess their work. The John Collins Writing System requires student reflections for Types 2, 3, and 4, and the "ten percent summary" activities. Peer editing is a frequently employed strategy for instruction. In art, students are regularly able to self-critique, peer coach, and peer critique and are asked to keep a journal at the start of a large project so that they can identify prior knowledge and skills along with new knowledge and skills. In seventh grade social studies class, students have an opportunity to self-assess using the same rubric that the teacher uses to assess student learning. Teachers make use of the limited technology that is available, and about half of WJSHS students report that their teachers ask them to use technology. Although professional development related to the use of content-specific instructional strategies involving technology has not yet been provided, some monthly faculty meeting time has been used to roll out technology initiatives that impact the entire faculty. Science teachers have a computer lab which is often available to students to work on research and to type up lab reports. Some math teachers regularly use clicker technology as a formative assessment tool. The art teacher uses a document camera to assist students in tracing a smaller image onto a much larger scale. The physical education department uses its newly acquired five X-box 1's to diversify opportunities for students to enrich their physical education experience. In 56 percent of observed lessons, teachers incorporated technology into their instruction. LCD projectors are often used in the delivery of instruction, especially through PowerPoint, projecting tablets, projecting videos, and use with Mimio. Cell phones are used in the AP Biology class to assist students in research, and graphing calculators are used in the AP Statistics and Honors Calculus classes, although only scientific calculators are available to students in other math classes and in science classes. In the newly re-instituted Computer-Aided Design (CAD) class, students use desktop computers daily to complete class assignments. While some other classrooms do have student computers, many teachers report that as a result of the antiquated operating systems these computers are rendered virtually useless. The school completed major technology upgrades for the 2015-2016 school year and intends to continue to include technology upgrades in future annual budgets. When teachers personalize instruction; engage students in cross-disciplinary learning as active and self-directed learners, and in self-assessment and reflection; emphasize inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking; apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks; and integrate technology, student opportunities to achieve the school's 21st century standards are maximized. (self-study, student shadowing, classroom observations, teacher interview, student work, students, teachers, Instruction Standard Subcommittee, Endicott survey, in-school survey, Five-Year Targeted Plan, principal)

Teachers adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by sometimes using formative assessment, especially during instructional time, and sometimes differentiating strategically, often purposefully organizing group learning activities, and frequently providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom. Only 58 percent of teachers at WJSHS report using formative assessment at least weekly, although some informal use of formative assessment was used in about 70 percent of observed classes. Examples of formative assessment strategies used include exit slips, John Collins' Type One and Type Two writing assignments, use of personal whiteboards for student responses or clicker technology that provide quick feedback on student learning, quick sketches/drawings, daily warm-ups, blue book activities documenting progress over time, homework review and feedback, and teacher questioning of individual students. Math classes use a series of unit pre-assessments across the district that inform instructional planning for the unit to be taught. Most teachers utilize a ten percent pre- and post-summary guided by the same three focus content areas prescribed by the John Collins Writing System. In physical education, students undergo pre- and post-tests in the areas of strength, endurance, flexibility, and cardiovascular fitness. About 80% of teachers believes that they frequently use differentiated instruction, but strategic differentiation was observed in only 20% of the classrooms visited. However, the use of formative assessments to make immediate and flexible decisions to improve the success of the lesson being taught are much less evident. Some teachers do revise future lessons and unit plans based on past student performance. The primary mode of differentiation employed by many teachers is the scaffolding of lessons and activities. Sometimes teachers require certain students to answer a reduced number of questions or problems as compared to the class as a whole or vary reading materials depending upon the reading level of the student. A far more common instructional practice is the use of cooperative learning or small group work. According to the Endicott survey, 86 of students indicate that their teachers use group activities, and in a school-created survey, over 90 percent of teachers report at least sometimes engaging students in group activities. Science labs are organized to engage students in inquiry learning through collaboration with their lab partner, and many classes involve students in small group tasks, discussions, and/or peer tutoring. Opportunities for students to work in groups took place in about 70 percent of observed classes. Endicott survey data indicates that approximately 75 percent of all students feel that teachers use a variety of teaching strategies and slightly less than one-half of them spend one-on-one time with them. Teachers are generally available both before and after school to provide extra-help sessions for students who need additional time to learn. NewsELA is an available resource used in the selection of articles of differentiated reading levels for ten percent summary assignments so that all students can access the same reading selections at a more appropriate level. In some classes such as all 8th grade social studies classes, guided notes are provided to support students struggling with the note-taking and high school ELA classes provide parallel reading materials to maximize participation of special education students in high school ELA classes. When teachers adjust their instructional practices by using formative assessment, especially during instructional time, strategically differentiating, purposefully organizing group activities, and providing additional support and alternative strategies, the percentage of students meeting their learning targets will increase. (self-study, Endicott survey, in-school survey, student shadowing, classroom observations, teacher interview, students, teachers, Instruction Standard Subcommittee)

Teachers, individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices by sometimes using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments and the examination of student work, often using feedback from a variety of sources, including students, other teachers, supervisors, and parents, and occasionally examining current research and engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice. Eighty percent of teachers report that they use student data a variety of assessments to improve instructional practice. Within the last few years, core subjects have examined Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) data to make curricular

alterations and instructional adjustments. For example, in math department meetings teachers use item analysis data from MCAS to identify learning objectives in which students have difficulty and discuss the instructional implications of this data. While individual teachers report that they often look at student work from their own classes to identify misconceptions that can inform their instructional practices, formal opportunities to have common discussions based on the examination of student work are sporadic, and teachers express the desire to have more designated time for collaboration that could be used for common examinations of student work and conversations about instructional practices. Teachers make use of a variety of feedback while examining and improving instructional practices. About half of WJSHS students indicate that teachers seek their ideas on how to improve their teaching. Student feedback comes in the form of surveys given to students by their teachers at the end of projects, units, and semesters. Teachers use these surveys to determine student perceptions of the effectiveness of activities, projects, media, and other instructional activities in achieving the desired academic goals. Teachers also help each other through formal and informal conversations and exchanges of practices and ideas. The principal has added the use of a peer observation protocol as another means to improve instruction, and has begun a program in which the English and math departments work in collaboration with the state's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) on a formal peer observation program. In this program, a DESE representative accompanies a teacher on a classroom observation of one of his or her peers and follow-up meetings between both teachers and the representative provide the opportunity to discuss findings and offer suggestions for improvement. The school has a formal evaluation plan that over 70 percent of teachers feel input from supervisors plays an important role in improving their instructional practices. Teachers write annual professional goals, consult the current literature related to these goals, and engage in formal conversations with their supervisors to support their attainment of these goals. Though fifty-seven percent of teachers report having contact with parents using a variety of methods, only forty-five percent of parents feel their input is used to modify instruction. Teachers have regular formal meeting time with their departments each month of the school year. Currently, the English department is focused on better aligning the taught curriculum to the written curriculum. In the junior high, 7th and 8th grade teachers have common meeting time that is used in part to discuss instructional strategies. The entire school is vested in the district goal of implementing the John Collins Writing System across all subjects to improve student writing.   The library contains professional resources, which provide books on teaching and pedagogy, but the school only minimally provides teachers with formal time to review current research and best practices. Nevertheless, the principal fosters a culture in part through monthly meetings with the school's department heads and through dedicating faculty meeting time to collaborative discussions by department in lieu of more traditional announcement-driven, school-wide faculty meetings, and this has resulted in more professional discourse focused on instructional practice. The school minimally provides formal time to discuss current research related to instruction, and only 28 percent of teachers report frequently using current research to plan instruction. Instructional practices are improved and thereby student learning increased when all teachers, individually and collaboratively, are provided with frequent opportunities to use student achievement data, to examine student work, to receive feedback from varied sources, and to engage in professional discourse focused on instructional practice. (self-study, student shadowing, Endicott survey, in-school survey, teacher interviews, students, teachers, Instruction Standard Subcommittee, principal)

Teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, usually maintain expertise in their content area and often maintain expertise in content-specific instructional practices. Survey data indicate that 84 percent of WJSHS students believe that their teachers are knowledgeable about the subject that they teach, and that 89 percent of teachers feel that they maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. Most teachers at WJSHS take the initiative to ensure they are maintaining expertise in their content areas, as almost 80 percent of them are currently taking or have recently taken college courses and/or professional development workshops in their content areas. For example, the AP

Biology teacher has participated in several one-week summer courses designed by the College Board, teams of teachers have attended the Hampshire Valley Collaborative over the summer, and the librarian took a course through University of Massachusetts on coding. Other professional workshops that teachers have recently attended include assessment workshops in connection with PARCC (the consortium responsible for common core assessments in Massachusetts and several other states), DDM workshops for teachers of art, a workshop on strategies to support special education students in the classroom, MCAS-ALT workshops, John Collins Writing System workshops, Sheltered English Immersion workshops, and National Science Teachers workshops. In addition, all teachers from Ware Junior Senior High School recently participated in workshops related to behavior management delivered by expert Polly Bath. There is a monthly newsletter outlining the upcoming professional development events that the district supports. Additionally, 79 percent of teachers report that they subscribe to and regularly read scholarly articles on instructional practices related to their content areas. Some examples of this literature include *The New York Times*, *National Geographic*, *Archaeology*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Voices from the Middle, The English Journal, Science Teacher, Art Education, The Journal of the National Art Education Association*, and *Smithsonian*. Teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, have the opportunity to model self-directed, life-long learning for their students, and when they maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices, they are enabled to provide meaningful instruction that instills a life-long love of learning in their students. (self-study, student shadowing, teacher interview, in-school survey, Endicott survey, in-school survey, students, teachers, Instruction Standard Subcommittee)

Commendations:

1. The instructional practices of many teachers that actively engage students in their learning
2. The initiative to use peer observation as an effective form of professional development for the specific purpose of improving instruction
3. The frequent use of feedback from a wide variety of sources, including feedback from students, to improve instructional practices
4. The frequent use of purposefully organized group activities and provision of additional supports to meet the learning needs of all students
5. The efforts of teachers to maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices

Recommendations:

1. Examine instructional practices to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations
2. Develop and implement a process to ensure that all teachers frequently emphasize inquiry, problem solving, higher order thinking, and the application of knowledge and skills to authentic tasks
3. Increase both student and teacher use of technology for instructional purposes by continuing to upgrade available technology and by providing professional development opportunities in the instructional use of technology
4. Provide more formal opportunities for teachers to collaborate to improve instructional practices, to review and discuss current research related to instructional practices, and to increase opportunities for cross-disciplinary lessons

5. Increase professional development opportunities to support differentiated instruction and the effective use of instructional time in a block schedule

4   Assessment of and for Student Learning

Assessment informs students and stakeholders of progress and growth toward meeting the school's 21st century learning expectations. Assessment results are shared and discussed on a regular basis to improve student learning. Assessment results inform teachers about student achievement in order to adjust curriculum and instruction.

1. The professional staff continuously employs a formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

2. The school's professional staff communicates:
   - individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to students and their families
   - the school's progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to the school community.

3. Professional staff collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement.

4. Prior to each unit of study, teachers communicate to students the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed.

5. Prior to summative assessments, teachers provide students with the corresponding rubrics.

6. In each unit of study, teachers employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments.

7. Teachers collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments.

8. Teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work.

9. Teachers regularly use formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning.

10. Teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice, including all of the following:
    - student work
    - common course and common grade-level assessments
    - individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
    - standardized assessments
    - data from sending schools, receiving schools, and post-secondary institutions
    - survey data from current students and alumni.

11. Grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning.

Conclusions

The Ware Junior Senior High School (WJSHS) professional staff does not yet employ a formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. The John Collins Writing System has been implemented school-wide with fidelity as a means of unifying the school's approach to writing instruction and formative assessment. Teachers demonstrate a comfort with this method of assessment and students are familiar with the task, scoring, and process-specific vocabulary. While this rubric addresses the school's 21st century learning expectation of effective written communication, limited evidence supports the assessment of other 21st century learning expectations. Over 80 percent of faculty members report that they do not use school-wide rubrics for assignments, and a review of student work provides evidence that many teachers use rubrics but not the school-wide rubrics that had been previously established. Faculty members and administrators are aware that the implementation of school-wide rubrics needs immediate attention and have committed to the re-examination and revision of the school-wide rubrics in their Two-Year Plan to align with the core values, beliefs, 21st century learning expectations, and content-specific skills of WJSHS. The development and implementation of a formal process to assess individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations will ensure that each student's progress is measured against the core values and beliefs of the school and will enable all stakeholders to evaluate WJSHS's progress in achieving these expectations. (self-study, student work, teachers, students, teacher interviews, classroom observations, Two-Year Targeted Plan, Endicott survey, school leadership)

The school's professional staff does not yet communicate individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to students nor does it communicate student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to student families and the school community. Without implementation of school-wide rubrics based on 21st century learning expectations, it is impossible for professional staff to report any progress based on actual data. The Two-Year Plan includes as a goal the redesign of report cards to communicate student progress toward achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. Teachers have reported that 21st century skills addressed in their classes are communicated to students in course syllabi and unit objectives. Additionally, students note teacher reference to the 21st century learning expectations during classroom instruction, specifically prior to lesson delivery. Student grades are communicated via progress reports and report cards and are accessible via the iPass school information system by students, families, and teachers. Additionally, parents report that they regularly have opportunities to communicate with teachers about student achievement via phone or email. Eighty-four percent of teachers update student grades on the online system at least once per week. When the school's communication of student progress includes communicating progress in achieving school-wide learning expectations, all members of the school community will be able to monitor both individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, parents, in-school survey, school support staff, teachers, teacher interviews, Two-Year Targeted Plan)

Professional staff collects data from a few sources and sometimes disaggregates and analyzes data to respond to inequities in student achievement. Staff members examine data from MCAS, AP testing, WIDA ACCESS, and other standardized tests. When examining MCAS data, a few departments disaggregate scores and review an item analysis to identify and respond to areas of difficulty, and some also use the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) reporting of MCAS scores to predict success in course levels and to inform course placement. Special attention is paid by the English, science, and mathematics departments to supporting students who score below average on the MCAS. Teachers report that they have access to a limited amount of student data, and would like to have data such as language proficiency levels of English language learners that might help them to

effectively respond to inequities in student achievement. Writing has been identified as a priority concern and has found an achievement gap between regular and special education students. As part of the John Collins Writing System that is being implemented to address the need to improve student writing, staff members have committed to gathering student achievement data on the "ten percent summary assignment" and using this data to inform areas of student need and identify targets for future instruction. As a member of the River West School-to-Career online database, the guidance department tracks student internship participation to match student career goals and job skills with member businesses in the surrounding community. As part of the Five-Year Plan, guidance plans to gather and examine student progress toward the school's 21st century learning expectations as a means to inform programmatic changes. The systematic collection, disaggregation, and analysis of assessment results enable educators to respond in a meaningful way to achievement inequities and to adjust curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of their diverse learners. (self-study, Two- and Five-Year Plans, school support staff, school leadership, teachers)

Prior to each unit of study, teachers do not clearly communicate to students the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations, although some teachers communicate the related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed. The school's 21st century learning expectations are posted in each classroom and are accessible through the WJSHS website. Furthermore, curriculum documents list unit-specific goals, and most teachers post their learning objectives for each particular lesson on the day that they are teaching that lesson. However, according to the Endicott survey, only 43 percent of the faculty reports that expectations for student performance are clearly posted for each unit. When teachers communicate corresponding 21st century learning expectations and unit-related content specifications to students prior to each unit of study, students will be better to understand the themes and big ideas of a particular unit and will be able to make the connections between the units of study and the 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, Endicott survey, teachers, teacher interviews, students, classroom observations)

Prior to summative assessments, some teachers provide students with the corresponding rubrics. Most teachers do provide rubrics to accompany major assignments and some assessments, and 80 percent of students report that teachers use rubrics to assess their work; however, these rubrics do not generally provide clear content-related expectations for students to demonstrate proficiency of unit goals or school-wide 21st century skills. Instead, the information provided to students in these rubrics usually clarifies what is expected of students in regard to procedures, effort, presentation, and/or completion of specific tasks. As a result, students report that when presented with an assessment, they know what they are supposed to do, but are consistently unable to identify the course-specific or 21st century skills necessary to demonstrate proficiency. Eighty-one percent of teachers surveyed do not use a school-wide rubric for their assignments, and summative assessments rarely make mention of any connection to 21st century learning expectations. Students report that rubrics or scoring guides for summative assessments are dependent upon the type of assignment; for example, some students report that rubrics are provided for many projects but not for each summative writing assignment. The provision of rubrics to students prior to summative assessments in all classes will enable students to understand in advance how they will demonstrate their achievement of both course-specific and school-wide learning expectations. (self-study, students, Endicott survey, in-school survey, student work)

In each unit of study, the vast majority of teachers at WJSHS employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments. According to the Endicott survey, 86 percent of teachers report that they use a wide variety of assessment strategies. Both classroom observations and examinations of student work reveal that assessments are regularly used both formatively and summatively to check for student understanding. Teachers use formative assessment strategies such as teacher reviews of homework assignments, various oral reading strategies, analysis of student responses

to questions, and student reflections at the conclusion of assignments or at the end of the class period. All departments have demonstrated the use of the John Collins Writing System as a means of formatively assessing student writing across the subject areas. The use of a multitude of assessment strategies ensures that all students have the opportunity to demonstrate that they have met the learning expectations and objectives being assessed in a variety of ways. (self-study, teachers, teacher interviews, student shadowing, classroom observations, Endicott survey, student work)

WJSHS teachers sometimes collaborate in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments but rarely on common assessments. The school currently does not utilize any common summative final course assessments unless all sections of a particular course are taught by the same teacher. According to the Endicott survey, 46 percent of teachers report that they meet formally to discuss and improve assessment strategies. This collaboration takes place within departments either during department meetings, on professional development days, or through informal discussions during the school day. The math department administers some assessments that share common questions and has plans for the development of common sections within final examinations this school year. The social studies, science, and English departments have identified a need to collaborate with one another in similar ways but do not regularly do so, as teachers in these departments also express the desire to maintain autonomy in issues relating to curriculum and instruction and specifically in regard to the creation, analysis, and revision of assessments. The collaborative development and implementation of common course assessments helps ensure that student achievement of course-specific and school-wide learning expectations are measured with consistency within departments and that assessment results are used to impact revisions in both curriculum and instructional practices. (self-study, Endicott survey, teachers, teacher interviews, students, school leadership)

Many teachers provide feedback to students that is usually timely, but only sometimes specific and corrective and only occasionally ensures that students are able to revise and improve their work. According to survey data, 76 percent of students report that teachers assess and correct school work in a reasonable amount of time, and 71 percent of them feel that teachers offer suggestions to help them improve their school work. Additionally, 88 percent of teachers report that graded student work is usually returned within three days, and 80 percent of them report that teacher feedback is specific, timely, and corrective. Some teachers also provide oral feedback in a timely manner about assessments or assignments previously administered to clarify any student misunderstandings. The opportunity to revise or improve work based upon teacher feedback is a practice that is inconsistently applied across the content areas, usually in regard to written assignments rather than tests or quizzes, and varies depending upon teacher preference. Currently, the school does not have a uniform policy either across or within departments that requires teachers to provide students opportunities to revise and improve their work. Despite this lack of policy and common practice, there are pockets of faculty members, notably in the visual and performing arts department, who consistently use teacher and peer feedback to students for the specific purpose of revising and improving student work. When students have regular opportunities to revise and improve their work with the assistance of specific, timely, and corrective feedback, more students will take advantage of that feedback and will increase their opportunities to achieve both course-specific and school-wide learning expectations. (self-study, Endicott survey, in-school surveys, teachers, teacher interviews, students, parents, Assessment Standard Subcommittee)

Teachers regularly use formative assessment to assess student learning and sometimes use formative assessment to adjust their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning. Seventy percent of teachers interviewed indicated when questioned about their selected student work samples that they use the student work discussed to inform their instruction, and a similar percentage use some form of formative assessment during classroom observations. Formative assessment is usually used to adjust instruction on a topic at some future point in time rather than to flexibly adjust instruction within a given

lesson. Furthermore, the variety of formative assessments that can be observed school-wide is limited; for example, many teachers ask questions of individual students rather than use a far more efficient strategy that gives a broader picture of student understanding such as think-pair-share, turn-and-talk, or obtaining whole-class data in response to a question through the use of technology. Some teachers within the math and English departments do at times use technology in the form of student response clickers or an Internet-based discussion platform as a tool for formative assessment. All departments have demonstrated the use of the John Collins Writing System as a means of formatively assessing student writing across the subject areas, and, as a result, the majority of teachers report not only an improvement in student classroom writing proficiency, but in a rise in school-wide MCAS scores. Increasing the school-wide use of a variety of student-centered formative assessment strategies that more immediately inform instruction will enable teachers to adjust their instruction to support student learning in a manner that is most timely and appropriate. (self-study, classroom observations, teachers, students, teacher interviews, Assessment Standard Subcommittee)

Many teachers and administrators, individually and sometimes collaboratively, examine evidence of student learning including student work, standardized assessments, and occasionally common course and common grade-level assessments, but not including individual progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations or an examination of data from receiving schools or post-secondary institutions, for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice. Most teachers report the use of MCAS data and/or student work to help inform future decisions about curriculum and instruction. Individual MCAS results as well as results from other standardized tests such as PSATs are used to make decisions about student placement. The use of common course or common grade-level assessments is very limited, but the science department, in particular, has a practice of using assessments that have 80 percent common material, and the mathematics department is planning more common assessments to provide more consistent data about student learning of course objectives. Collins Types 1 and 2 exercises to assess student writing are used throughout the school. The school is aware of the need to include more data sources to inform decisions about curriculum and instructional practices as evidenced by the school's Two-Year Plan, which includes the goal of reviewing and revising curricula that have not recently been addressed, and the Five-Year Plan, which addresses the need to utilize data collected over time regarding students' progress toward the 21st century learning expectations to make programmatic changes. Once teachers and administrators use data sources that include school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations, surveys from current students and alumni, and data from sending schools, receiving schools, and post-secondary institutions, the school will be able to take advantage of the full range of information necessary to most effectively revise curriculum and instructional practices at WJSHS. (self-study, school leadership, department leaders, school committee, school support staff, teachers, Two- and Five-Year Targeted Plans)

Grading and reporting practices are not regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. At WJSHS, grading and reporting practices were reviewed approximately ten years ago to ensure that they were aligned to the school's core values and beliefs about learning but have not been reviewed since that time. Currently, grading practices contain a high degree of subjectivity based on the beliefs of individual teachers and are frequently weighted toward effort, participation, and compliance as opposed to measurable student performance in line with the school's core values and school-wide learning expectations and course-specific goals. Students report that grading practices are inconsistent across teachers, disciplines, and course levels and that their behavior and approach to class is often weighted heavily in the determination of their final grade. Department leaders cite that the shortage of common planning time coupled with the desire to provide individual teachers with grading autonomy and flexibility has contributed to grading practices that can vary greatly from teacher to teacher. The current leadership recognizes that the differing passions and viewpoints of its staff members can be both a strength and an opportunity for growth, but that

establishing greater consistency in grading and reporting practices is a future goal. The development and standardization of grading and reporting practices that are aligned to the school's core values and beliefs about learning will lead to greater consistency and equity when evaluating student achievement. (self-study, teachers, students, Assessment Standard Subcommittee, school leadership)

Commendations:

1. The effective use of online grade reporting to keep students and their parents informed about student progress in their courses
2. The regular use of rubrics to communicate teacher expectations about course assignments to all students
3. The consistent use of teacher and peer feedback to students for the purpose of improving student performance in the visual and performing arts department
4. The use of MCAS and other standardized test data for a variety of purposes related to curriculum revision, instructional practices, and student placement
5. The adaptation of the John Collins Writing System for Type 1 and Type 2 on-demand student writing samples as a school-wide assessment that is used formatively to improve student writing
6. The use of technology by some English and math teachers to collect instant data that can inform instruction

Recommendations:

1. Develop and implement a formal process based on school-wide rubrics to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
2. Communicate the school's progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to all WJSHS stakeholders
3. Increase the use of assessment data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement
4. Communicate to students prior to each unit of study the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific goals to be assessed
5. Increase the development and implementation of common course assessments in all departments
6. Revise and implement common grading and reporting practices rooted in research-based practices to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning

SUPPORT STANDARDS

SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

5 **School Culture and Leadership**

The school culture is equitable and inclusive, and it embodies the school's foundational core values and beliefs about student learning. It is characterized by reflective, collaborative, and constructive dialogue about research-based practices that support high expectations for the learning of all students. The leadership of the school fosters a safe, positive culture by promoting learning, cultivating shared leadership, and engaging all members of the school community in efforts to improve teaching and learning.

1. The school community consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all.

2. The school is equitable, inclusive, and fosters heterogeneity where every student over the course of the high school experience is enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core course (English/language arts, social studies, math, science, or world languages).

3. There is a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

4. In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff:
   ▪ engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning
   ▪ use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices
   ▪ dedicate formal time to implement professional development
   ▪ apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

5. School leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning.

6. The organization of time supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students.

7. Student load and class size enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students.

8. The principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations.

9. Teachers, students, and parents are involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership.

10. Teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning.

11. The school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

12. The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school.

Conclusions

Ware Junior Senior High School consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful and supportive school culture that fosters student responsibility for learning resulting in pride and high expectations for all. The positive school culture is fostered via multiple avenues including, but not limited to, strong administrative leadership, a caring and engaged faculty and staff, a vibrant high school advisory program, a clean and bright school building, and a student advisory committee which meets monthly with the principal. Building security is maintained by visible surveillance systems and security measures that inhibit unauthorized entry to the building, and both a district safety coordinator and the recent addition of a grant-funded school resource officer further support safety. All thirty-seven students interviewed expressed that they feel safe at school. It is extremely clear from conversations with parents and students that a large majority of students at WJSHS feel that their teachers truly care about them as individuals, and, as a result, most students take pride and ownership in the school. Students contribute to the overall cleanliness of the school and student groups have brightened many areas of the school with artwork and wall paintings. The safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture at WJSHS provides an environment where teachers are vested in meeting student needs and students are supported in their efforts to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, students, facility tour, classroom observations, teachers, guidance counselors)

The school is mostly equitable and inclusive, ensuring students access to challenging academic experiences, often ensuring that courses are populated with a variety of students reflecting the diversity of the student body, and fostering some heterogeneity in support of the school's 21st century learning expectations. The majority of classes for seventh and eighth grade students are heterogeneously grouped. In grades nine through twelve most core courses offer an honors or Advanced Placement (AP) level in addition to the standard college preparatory level. Most of the 18.4 percent of the student population identified as special education are fully included in mainstream classes, and furthermore students who are identified as substantially separate in some academic areas are fully included in other academic areas. Only the few students in the Life Experience Academic Preparation (LEAP) program for students who are significantly cognitively disabled are not included in the regular educational program. All students in mainstream classes at WJSHS are assured of taking at least two core courses (world history and United States history) that are grouped heterogeneously. Increasing the number of opportunities for students to be enrolled in heterogeneously grouped core courses will further ensure that all students have equal access to courses that are academically challenging. (self-study, teachers, program of studies)

Ware Junior Senior High School has a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. WJSHS has a formal advisory program for all students in grades nine through twelve that provides time for groups of students to work with a teacher on a topic of interest. At the beginning of each school year, students are given an opportunity to select an advisory that may be of interest and are then scheduled to meet with their chosen advisory group for forty minutes every Tuesday. These areas of interest include, but are not limited to, competitive debate, current events, Ware newsletter, Domestic Violence Task Force, National Art Honor Society, foods, video game creation, and Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA). The service orientation of the GSA and the Domestic Violence Task Force align well to the school's civic expectations and connect students with their in-school peers and with the surrounding community. One indication that the program is working is that all 37 students interviewed agree that they have a supportive relationship with at least one adult in the school other than their guidance counselor. The strong advisory program demonstrates the school's commitment to helping every student connect with at least one adult other than the guidance counselor

and thus provides another mentor to guide the student along the path to achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, students, teacher interview, panel presentation)

In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff sometimes engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning, sometimes use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices, occasionally dedicate some formal time in school to implement professional development, and regularly apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Four half-days dispersed throughout the course of the school year are designated for staff members to collaborate professionally. In addition, the principal strives to set aside some of the time during monthly faculty meetings for teachers to collaborate, and much of the time spent in the monthly department meetings is used for professional discourse. To assist new faculty members in their development, the school has a formal mentoring program that offers support and opportunities for peer observation and reflection in order to improve professional practice. Some teachers participate in workshops and take graduate courses at their own expense and, additionally, a pool of money is available in the district to help pay the tuition for teachers to take graduate courses. Also a limited amount of money is available for teachers in the school system to take advantage of professional development activities outside of the school as long as these activities are related to district initiatives. The school schedule does not provide for common planning time during the school day, but many teachers informally collaborate with other teachers in their departments before and after school. Teachers intermittently engage in conversations about professional learning, but topics such as establishing consistent grading practices, creating common formative and summative assessments, and revising and aligning curriculum documents to the school's 21st century learning expectations have not been addressed. The school administration has provided all teachers in intensive training on the John Collins Writing System, including two days of in-school support by John Collins in person, and has taken measures to ensure that teachers apply what they learned through this training. Some staff members pursue training opportunities on an individual basis at their own expense. Nevertheless, a survey recently conducted by the school found that only 16 percent of teachers believe that professional time is conducive to collaboration among colleagues in supporting research-based instruction. When WJSHS is able to provide its staff with appropriate opportunities for discourse, reflection, and best practices that are aligned to its core values and ensures that in their classrooms staff members apply what they learned, the likelihood of instructional improvement and its resulting impact on student learning will be greatly increased. (self-study, teacher interviews, teachers, classroom observations, department leaders, building administrators, district administrators)

School leaders have begun to use a research-based evaluation and supervision process that focuses on improved teaching practices and student learning outcomes. In 2013, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Educations (DESE) adopted the Massachusetts Model Evaluation System for Educator Evaluation. This model connects educator instruction and assessment practices to targeted learning outcomes for students. The DESE model has extensive rubrics designed to measure educator effectiveness on four standards: instruction, teaching all students, community engagement, and professional culture. The expectations established by school leaders are clearly outlined and articulated in the rubrics, and through their use all educators receive a rating of exemplary, proficient, needs improvement, or unsatisfactory. Administrators are trained to support teachers in the development of strategic goals using the SMART goal process to improving teaching practices and positively impact student learning. The principal collaborates with educators to establish a student learning goal and a professional practice goal. For the current school year, the principal has asked all teachers to base their student learning goal on the school's goal of increasing achievement outcomes in the area of written communication skills as targeted by the John Collins Writing System initiative. The principal reviews the process and outlines his expectations for teachers at an annual orientation meeting as mandated by

the DESE, addressing topics such as goal setting, educator plan development, evidence collection, and opportunities for feedback. Evidence gathered from announced and unannounced classroom observations, student assessment data as collected by District Determined Measures (DDMs), and artifacts submitted by the educator is reviewed and included in the summative evaluation. As an important cog in the evaluation process, the principal and the assistant principal offer instructional support to teachers, engage in constructive and collaborative conversations with teachers, and offer timely feedback regarding instructional practices. According to data from the Endicott survey, 72 percent of teachers believe that input from supervisors who are responsible for evaluating their teaching plays an important role in improving their instructional practices. Through the faithful implementation of the research-based evaluation system, the opportunity for educators to develop and grow professionally will ultimately improve instructional quality and thereby improve achievement outcomes for all students. (self-study, teachers, department heads, Endicott survey, building administrators, central office personnel)

Across the school, the organization of time in some ways supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students. The block schedule does provide teachers with the time needed to engage students in inquiry, deep exploration, and critical thinking related to the essential questions that form the backbone of the written curriculum. At the same time, teachers report that the master schedule as currently designed is unable to provide them with common planning time within the school day which would enable teachers to engage in professional discourse, to design common lessons and common assessments, and to share instructional practices most effective in teaching the curriculum. The school has three different daily time schedules: one for seventh grade, one for eighth grade, and one for high school students. Many junior high students prefer the seventh grade schedule in which the core courses are front-loaded followed by the opportunity for silent sustained reading (SSR) and specials blocks at the end of the day as opposed to the eighth grade schedule in which SSR and specials blocks are at the start of the day followed by a long block of academic classes over the remainder of the day. There are concerns within the school that changing the current schedule would require the addition of six new teaching positions which the district would be unable to afford and also that the process of forming a committee to develop a new master schedule would be divisive depending on whose schedule preference was chosen. Only when the school's organization of time is determined by an inclusive process that establishes scheduling priorities based on its core value and beliefs and is informed by current research will the school be able to develop a master schedule that best serves the needs of its students. (self-study, teachers, students, department heads, building administrators)

Student load and class size are mostly equitable, only occasionally making it difficult for some teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students. Twenty-nine of 33 teachers believes that they can meet the needs of all their students some or most of the time, and 79 percent of students feel that their class sizes are reasonable while 72 percent of parents feel that class sizes are sufficient to meet their children's needs. The block schedule contributes to the very reasonable student loads assigned to the large majority of the high school faculty. Since about half of the student population at WJSHS consists of students in the 7th and 8th grades, the junior high school classes tend to be a little larger, and the school recently added an ELA teacher to the junior high school to accommodate a large incoming seventh grade class. For the current school year WJSHS hired an additional Spanish teacher and reinstated the CAD program. The school also offers several AP classes every other year rather than every year to avoid the imbalance created when classes fall below ten students, and the Virtual High School and the Holyoke Community College and Springfield Technical Community College dual enrollment programs serve a combined 45 students, further reducing class sizes and teaching loads. With the recent increase in staff, and students participating in non-traditional credit bearing programs, teachers' ability to personalize learning to meet

the learning needs of individual students has significantly improved. (self-study, Endicott survey, in-school survey, teachers, building administrators, central office personnel)

The principal deliberately and regularly works with building staff to provide instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The principal is a highly visible leader who is respected throughout the school community. The principal consciously limits the initiatives to be implemented and then ensures that these initiatives are implemented with fidelity. For example, when the school and its faculty members identified improvement of writing across the curriculum as a priority and identified the implementation of the John Collins Writing System as the best means to accomplish this, the principal ensured that this program was implemented by all teachers across the school. He maintains an "open door" policy for all stakeholders and engages teachers, parents, and students in conversations about teaching and learning at the school. He regularly meets with the administrative team, regularly communicates with all stakeholders, and meets once each month after school with faculty and once a month with all department heads. The principal holds monthly luncheons with student council members to build relationships with student leaders and to listen to their concerns. In alignment with the school's mission statement, the principal supports the development of Advanced Placement (AP) courses and recognizes academic accomplishments by honoring student excellence in state testing, National Honor Society membership, and participation in community service (American Red Cross blood drives and domestic violence awareness). Because the principal employs an open and collaborative approach with a focus on student learning that is based on the school's core values and beliefs about learning, the school is better able to implement changes necessary to improve its educational program. (self-study, teachers, school leadership team)

Teachers, students, and parents are sometimes involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership. Faculty members have developed new Advanced Placement (AP) courses in language and composition, statistics, biology, and literature and had a strong voice in the 2015 reorganization of the Structured Learning Center (SLC) program. The school's student advisory program is organized by areas of interest identified by teachers with student input. The school examined its cell phone policy at the request of student leadership and through collaborative meetings among administrators, teachers, and students revised the policy to allow students to access their cell phones before school, during lunch and between classes. Students elect representatives to the student council, which meets monthly with the principal to have constructive dialogues about common areas of interest and has been recognized by the Massachusetts Association of Student Councils. The school council also meets monthly with the principal and includes parent representatives elected by the parents. According to the in-school survey given prior to the NEASC visit, 40 percent of teachers report that teachers, parents, and students are involved most of the time in meaningful decision-making, while another 43 percent of teachers report that they are sometimes involved in the decision-making process. When the school clearly defines roles in the formal decision-making process for all key stakeholder groups, there will be a resultant shared responsibility and sense of ownership of the crucial decisions that are made. (self-study, School Culture and Leadership Standard Subcommittee, parents, students, in-school survey)

Teachers often exercise initiative and leadership in different capacities essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. Teachers collaborate with other teachers, parents and students before school, during their personal time, throughout the day, and after school, thereby building a culture that supports the entire learning community of WJSHS. About 86 percent of teachers report that they at least sometimes exercise leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. Individual teachers have taken the initiative to design new courses, institute a school marching band, display student art around the school, open a boutique with donations of various articles of clothing and prom dresses, augment required afternoon extra-help

time by offering additional student help before school starts, write grants (such as a grant to purchase technology to support alternative physical education activities including zumba, bowling, tennis, and dancing), and create new extracurricular activities to fulfill student interests. Because teachers have multiple opportunities to demonstrate leadership in formal and informal ways, the result is a significant and positive impact on school improvement, student engagement, and learning. (self-study, School Culture and Leadership Standard Subcommittee, teachers, department heads, in-school survey)

The school committee, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. In the past ten years, WJSHS has undergone numerous changes in leadership. During this time the school has had four different principals, five assistant principals, and three superintendents, and town elections have changed the composition of the school committee. The previous principal (now the current superintendent) hired the current principal as her assistant and was instrumental in his development as an educational leader. Their relationship continues to be highly collaborative even though their roles have changed. The superintendent and school committee recently collaborated to craft a budget override proposal that could have added much-needed funding to support the schools. The principal, superintendent, and school committee have worked diligently and collaboratively to communicate to community members and business leaders the many positive school initiatives and endeavors in an effort to encourage more Ware residents to send their children to WJSHS. As long as the school committee, superintendent, and principal continue to use a collaborative approach that is reflective and constructive to reach meaningful compromise while remaining true to the school's core values and beliefs, the school will be able to focus on the achievement of its 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, principal, superintendent, school committee, School Culture and Leadership Standard Subcommittee)

The school committee and superintendent have provided the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school. Historically, the district leadership for Ware Public Schools has occasionally limited the principal's autonomy to lead the school in the quest to provide an educational program that best prepares its students to achieve all of its school-wide learning expectations. The school's self-study reports that in the past most initiatives to address curricular concerns originated from outside of the school. At times, decisions about budget, personnel, and programs have been made by previous school committees and superintendents that have overridden decisions made by the principal in the best interest of the school. Even as recently as the 2013-2014 school year, when the Endicott survey was conducted, only 53 percent of staff members believed that the principal had sufficient authority to lead the school. However, beginning with the past year when the previous principal became superintendent and the assistant principal became the principal this situation has improved considerably. The current principal reports that so far he has had complete autonomy to make the changes that he believes are in the best interest of the school and its students, and the current superintendent has supported him in some difficult decisions that he has made. This significant increase in the authority and autonomy of the principal makes it possible for him to make the crucial decisions necessary to move the school forward and to ensure that the school's core values and beliefs and its 21st century learning expectations drive these often difficult decisions. (self-study, Endicott survey, principal, superintendent, school committee, teachers)

Commendations:

1. The dedication of all staff members who strive daily to build a supportive school culture in which students feel cared for, safe, and respected
2. The vibrant advisory program that provides each high school student the opportunity to connect with an adult in the school other than the guidance counselor

3. The social studies department which offers core courses that ensure that virtually all students have opportunities to learn with their peers in a heterogeneous setting
4. The laser focus of the school's efforts to improve student writing across the school
5. The omnipresent instructional leadership provided by the principal in support of teaching and learning
6. The collaborative relationship among the principal, superintendent, and members of the school committee to work together on behalf of all WJSHS students
7. The autonomy and authority provided to the principal to make decisions aligned to the school's priorities and to its core values and beliefs

Recommendations:

1. Provide more formal opportunities for faculty to collaborate on developing common lessons and assessments, sharing instructional practices, and engaging in productive discourse about teaching and learning
2. Ensure that students have ample opportunity to enroll in heterogeneously grouped core courses over the course of their high school experience and provide teachers with professional development in strategies for teaching these courses
3. Re-examine the school schedule through the lens of the school's core values and beliefs and make the revisions necessary to best serve the needs of all students and ensure professional collaboration among teachers
4. Design and implement a formal ongoing professional development plan that supports the school's 21st century learning expectations
5. Create clearly defined roles for teachers, students, and parents to be involved in meaningful decision-making that promotes responsibility and ownership

6 **School Resources for Learning**

Student learning and well-being are dependent upon adequate and appropriate support. The school is responsible for providing an effective range of coordinated programs and services. These resources enhance and improve student learning and well-being and support the school's core values and beliefs. Student support services enable each student to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

1. The school has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, that support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

2. The school provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services.

3. Support services staff use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student.

4. School counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
    - deliver a written, developmental program
    - meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling
    - engage in individual and group meetings with all students
    - deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers
    - use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

5. The school's health services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
    - provide preventative health services and direct intervention services
    - use an appropriate referral process
    - conduct ongoing student health assessments
    - use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

6. Library/media services are integrated into curriculum and instructional practices and have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
    - are actively engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum
    - provide a wide range of materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum
    - ensure that the facility is available and staffed for students and teachers before, during, and after school
    - are responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning
    - conduct ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

7.   Support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners, have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:

- collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations
- provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students
- perform ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Conclusions

Ware Junior Senior High School (WJSHS) has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for students, including identified and at-risk students that support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. One school adjustment counselor (SAC), two guidance counselors, one nurse, and special education personnel make a concerted effort to address the various needs of the student population, including at-risk students, using different strategies and programming. Concerns about specific students are discussed in the weekly grade-level team meetings with teachers and guidance counselors; also, teachers, counselors, administrators, and/or parents can raise concerns. These referrals go to the Student Assistance Team (SAT), which includes the guidance counselors, involved teachers, administrators and the nurse and is coordinated by the school adjustment counselor and meets every other week to address concerns and issues regarding individual students in all grades. Some 59 percent of current teachers have referred students to the SAT, with most of them (63 percent) referring one to three students per year. The SAT reviews and utilizes relevant historical and current data and information regarding the progress of each individual student to determine the most appropriate interventions. Recommendations may range from suggestions for in-class interventions to referrals for outside support services such as individual therapy, special education evaluation, and/or placement in the Structured Learning Center (SLC). The SLC is an alternative school-within-the-school that provides intensive support and a flexible structure for students who are challenged by the traditional school day. The SLC serves approximately 20 regular education and special education students, and has one junior high and one high school classroom. There are varying levels of support students may receive within the SLC, including full-time placement, part-time placement in which the student attends some classes outside the center, and SLC privileges (homeroom, and/or check-ins throughout the day) and is coordinated by the Center School of Holyoke, an outside agency. The ultimate goal of the program is to reintegrate the students into the regular school setting. Another student support is a study skills class which is offered every other day through the special education department. The guidance department has an open door policy that allows students to drop in when they feel the need to do so, and teachers report that school counselors are readily available to discuss and troubleshoot any concerns about their students. Guidance counselors also develop plans with individual students to recover credits in order to increase their school success and continue progress toward graduation. Students can recover credits through grant-funded online classes either after school or during the summer under the supervision of a WJSHS teacher. During the fall of 2014, nine students were enrolled in the Credit Recovery Program. The SAC works with students who require counseling services as identified either through IEP or 504 plans and is also available to all students in crisis or in need of additional support. The SAC special education teacher also provides group lessons that emphasize social skills, bullying, and other adolescent issues to select students in the seventh and eighth grade. Theme-based advisories meet weekly in an effort to promote meaningful relationships between staff and students, thus providing another avenue to connect at-risk students to adults who can assist them. A range of direct and support services coordinated by the guidance department are available to identified special education students and students with 504 plans. The nurse provides a range of services to those students with medical needs, and many of the most medically compromised students have medical personnel assigned to them. Students report that school support for their needs is always readily available as teachers and other staff will pick up on issues and/or concerns and reach out to the appropriate support services for intervention. The caring and supportive school culture, coupled with a range of readily available student support services, enables those students most at-risk to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, School Resources Standard Subcommittee meeting, school support staff, teachers, students)

The school provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services. WJSHS has numerous systems in place to inform families regarding the school's student support services. Both the district and the school have their own websites that offer limited but

important basic information regarding student support services. The guidance department, the nurse, food services, and the special education office have links that allow families with computer access to obtain information about their services. The guidance department offers access to assistance with college planning and with obtaining financial aid and scholarships. The department also posts on its website a newsletter entitled "News, Events, and Information". The nurse's office has links on the school's website to health alerts; to information regarding immunizations, fire safety, influenza, blood-borne diseases; and to physical exam requirements and required forms. The food services department offers access to the requirements and applications for both free and reduced lunch programs and posts its lunch menus. The special education office provides access on the website to services offered by the school to all students living in Ware, including home-schooled and private school students. Its webpage contains links to both school and state documents pertaining to the rights of all students, including students with special needs.   The school also uses software called iParent that enables families to have current information about their students' attendance and grades. This program is always accessible from the district's website, and parents are encouraged to sign-up during the fall open house night where they are offered access to a computer and assistance with the sign-up process. Parents are also provided access to iParent during 504, IEP, or parent-teacher meetings. All support services personnel and teachers use email as a way to keep families with computers and mobile devices up-to-date with information about their students. The school uses the connectEd notification system, which enables WJSHS to notify all families of upcoming events and important information by placing phone calls either to each phone number on file or to a select group of parents. In addition using technology to provide families with access to information, support services personnel welcome families to come directly to the school to receive the information in person. A wide variety of brochures and resources are available to families in both the health services and guidance offices. Both the guidance staff and the school nurse also reach out to families via phone calls and mail, and, in addition, make home visits in those circumstances where there is difficulty connecting with families. Results from the Endicott survey indicate that 78.5 percent of parents agree that the school provides information about available support services. Reaching out to families through multiple means of communication ensures that all families, particularly those in need, receive important information regarding available services and supports and, as a result, connect students in need to the appropriate services and increase parent engagement with the school. (self-study, school website, parents, Endicott survey, school support staff)

Support services staff to some degree use technology to deliver a range of coordinated services for each student. Support staff members would like to increase their use of technology to deliver these services, but the technology currently available to support staff members does not meet the needs of today's students. In the guidance department, counselors use BigFuture, a program of the College Board, and Your Plan for the Future, provided by the state, for several workshops with juniors and seniors. The online Services for Students with Disabilities through the College Board is used to apply for individual PSAT and SAT testing for students with accommodations not provided at a testing center. Technology is heavily used for master scheduling and course scheduling. The school nurse uses the SNAP Health Center Student Records program, which is accessible to all district nurses and allows the nurse to view patterns of student visits, immunizations, allergies, and other medical conditions and medication information. This program is not connected to iPass so all information must be entered in to the system by the nurse, and, furthermore, it is not web-based and thus cannot be accessed in the case of an emergency evacuation or if the school were closed for a period of time. Special education staff members use Semestracker for writing IEPs and for managing information and services for identified students. However, there is no link between Semstracker and iPass, so all information is entered twice and updates must be shared on paper. They also occasionally use audio-books on CDs and a shared projector, but most of the computers in the special education classrooms are old and without speakers, and therefore do not have audio-book capability or speech-to-text or text-to-speech software. The computers do have Microsoft Word, which is used to assist students in correcting spelling and grammar. Effective use of

upgraded technology would allow the support services staff to deliver appropriate support services in a more timely and efficient manner and would more effectively support students achieve their learning expectations. (self-study, School Resources Standard Subcommittee, facility tour, teachers, school support staff)

School counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who deliver a variety of personal, academic, and career college counseling, engage in individual and/or group meetings with all students, and deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community mental health agencies and social service providers; but make limited use of ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.   WJSHS has two guidance counselors, an adjustment counselor, and a half-time school psychologist.   The school guidance counselors are flexible in meeting with students, sometimes going into English classes to present grade-specific content or holding group meetings in guidance around a specified topic while being available when possible for student drop-in visits as well as for regularly scheduled appointments.   Though the guidance counselors are working within the NEASC maximum recommended ratio of 300:1, they are challenged at times to adequately meet the needs of their students, especially given that over half of the student population is transient and/or receive free or reduced lunches.   The guidance department delivers services both through individual and group meetings, but at this time does not offer nor has a curriculum developed to conduct a developmental program.   Counselors also make use of assessment data in determining individual interventions to help students achieve the school's learning expectations.   The school adjustment counselor meets with students individually or together with the school psychologist and/or the special education teacher; also, the adjustment counselor has conducted social skills groups for targeted students in the 7th and 8th grade. Counselors collaborate regularly with state agencies including the juvenile court, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Youth Services. WJSHS also provides space for a therapist from Valley Human Services to meet with students at the school. This mutually beneficial service is arranged through parents and is currently only available to students with Mass Heath, although will be open to other students as the therapist increases insurance panel approvals. Mobile Crisis, a statewide program through the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative, is also accessed to provide support and assessment services to students in crisis. Although the guidance department provides individual, group, and programmatic support to students, the school does not have a formal system of evaluating student support services in order to improve services and to ensure that the services offered meet the academic and social needs of all students at WJSHS and the large student load makes it challenging for counselors to meet all students needs. (self-study, school support staff, School Resources Standard Subcommittee, panel presentation, students)

The school's health services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who provide preventative health services and direct intervention services, use an appropriate referral process, conduct ongoing student health assessments, and use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. The full-time registered nurse provides health services to all students in a modern, well-designed health suite. She routinely checks immunization and physicals records to make sure they are up-to-date, arranges for student presentations on STDs and abuse of over-the-counter drugs, informs families of needed updates, and conducts height, weight, eyes, ears, and posture screenings. The nurse is also an active member of both the student assistance team and the District Safety Committee. According to the Endicott survey, 89 percent of students feel comfortable going to the school nurse. Oral and written referrals may be made to outside counselors with Valley Human Services, to the Department of Children and Families, or to the pediatricians that serve WJSHS students. The nurse has also taken the initiative to open up a boutique for students that provides donated clothes and prom dresses. The nurse uses the SNAP (School Nurse Assessment Program) computer

program to examine data to improve health services at WJSHS and thereby maximize the ability to meet the health needs of its students and consequently enable them to focus on their learning goals. (self-study, nurse, students, parents, Endicott survey)

Library/media services are increasingly integrated into curriculum and instructional practices and have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who are actively engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum, provide a wide range of materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum, ensure that the facility is available and staffed for students and teachers before, during, and after school, are responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning, and conduct ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. The certified library/media specialist's position has been restored to full time for the 2015-6 school year after being reduced to part time the previous year, and the library has also undergone an upgrade of its computer lab. Although the involvement of the library /media specialist in the development and revision of curriculum is limited, she supports the delivery of the curriculum in all subject areas. The librarian seeks to help all teachers in curricular research projects by providing books, Internet links, and databases for student use. The library is open before, during, and after school to promote independent learning, especially to those students who have limited Internet access at home. An analysis by the Follett Corporation's "TitleWise" program of the approximately 13,000 materials in the school's library collection found that over 75 percent of them would be considered "beyond age range," and, as a result, the librarian has been provided with ample budget in the 2014-2015 school year to update the collection, largely by purchasing high-interest books written at appropriate reading levels. The librarian has also supported student learning by reorganizing the fiction collection by genre, initiating a school-wide summer reading program, and providing links to games, resources, typing practice, and databases on the library's website. She also provides a welcoming environment to encourage both student use as evidenced by the fact that 35 of the 37 students interviewed had already been to the library at least once (32 of them more than once) in the first month of school this year. While library/media services track the circulation of materials, teacher and student utilization of the library is not tracked, and no process is in place to evaluate these services, although a suggestion box has been created for students and teachers to make book recommendations. When the library/media specialist is involved in the processes of curriculum development, the school will better be able to deliver the full range of library services necessary to fully support student learning. (library/media specialist, self-study, parents, students)

There are an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who sometimes collaborate with teachers, counselors, and related service providers to deliver inclusive opportunities, sometimes complete on-going assessments using limited data to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. Currently, the school has nine special education teachers and twelve paraprofessionals who work in grades 7-12. Of these, four teachers and seven paraprofessionals work in small self-contained classrooms, either in the Structured Learning Center which serves approximately 12 students or the LEAP and Jr. LEAP programs for students with significant cognitive disabilities which also serves approximately 12 students. Sixty-three percent of staff members agree that the school has adequate, certified support services personnel for identified students, including special education, 504, and English language learners, and 69 percent of them report that special education students have adequate inclusive opportunities. WJSHS identifies students who are at-risk for academic, emotional, behavioral and health and provides educational and support services for identified students through multiple avenues. Students placed in substantially separate programs such as Learning Experience Achievement Program (LEAP) are provided many opportunities to acquire vocational skills that align with some of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Staff members have limited opportunities for collaboration through email communication and informal meetings

before, during, and after school, but no formal time is provided for special and regular education teachers who are co-teaching to plan lessons and discuss their implementation. Collaboration among special education personnel and guidance counselors occurs on an as-needed basis. Special education teachers use a beginning-of-the-year assessment to measure progress from the previous year, review and analyze MCAS data to assist the goal-setting process, and use formative assessments such as "mad minutes" as check-ins to see where students need improvement, and give instruction to remediate gaps in knowledge. They also routinely use pre- and post-tests to inform instruction and monitor student progress toward meeting learning goals and objectives. Some special education teachers indicate that they need additional training and more resources to effectively conduct formal assessments in the area of reading. During special education team meetings and through ongoing contact, special education teachers gather feedback from parents and guardians to help set and assess student progress toward meeting specific goals. Other avenues for parental feedback about existing programs and services include the special education Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) and a parent concern/complaint sheet posted on the district's website. Each quarter, special educators report out on student progress to parents or guardians, and, if students are not on target to meet their designated goals and objectives, they review and revised these goals with both parent and student participation in the process. Ware Public Schools does not have a full-time leader of special services, and faculty members and school and district leaders report that this current void in district student services leadership has impacted the delivery and oversight of the special education program. ELL services are provided in accordance with state regulations to the eight students currently requiring these services. While there is adequate school staff in special education to address students' educational needs, a review of district roles with respect to special education leadership and oversight will afford more effective coordination of programs, a more efficient use of resources, and will increase the overall effectiveness of the special education program in meeting student learning goals and objectives. (self-study, School Resources Standard Subcommittee, in-school survey, Endicott survey, teachers, building administrators, central office personnel)

Commendations:

1. The timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for students, including identified and at-risk students that support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations
2. The support to at-risk students through both in-school programs and through collaboration with state and local human service agencies
3. Opportunities for students to recover credits through grant-funded online classes either after school or during the summer under the supervision of a WJSHS teacher
4. The effectiveness of health services in meeting the needs of WJSHS students
5. The efforts of the counseling staff to meet the needs of students in spite of large caseloads
6. The measures currently being taken to improve the delivery of library/media services to all students
7. The many ways in which the school provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services

Recommendations:

1. Increase the use of technology to improve the delivery of student support services
2. Design and implement a developmental guidance curriculum
3. Include the library media specialist in curriculum development and integration

4. Design and implement a formal method to evaluate support services offered through the guidance department and the library/media center
5. Ensure that the school continues to provide a full-time librarian to serve the learning needs of its students
6. Provide the necessary leadership to ensure the adequate supervision and coordination of special education services

7 **Community Resources for Learning**

The achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations requires active community, governing board, and parent advocacy. Through dependable and adequate funding, the community provides the personnel, resources, and facilities to support the delivery of curriculum, instruction, programs, and services.

1. The community and the district's governing body provide dependable funding for:
    - a wide range of school programs and services
    - sufficient professional and support staff
    - ongoing professional development and curriculum revision
    - a full range of technology support
    - sufficient equipment
    - sufficient instructional materials and supplies.

2. The school develops, plans, and funds programs:
    - to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant
    - to properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment
    - to keep the school clean on a daily basis.

3. The community funds and the school implements a long-range plan that addresses:
    - programs and services
    - enrollment changes and staffing needs
    - facility needs
    - technology
    - capital improvements.

4. Faculty and building administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget.

5. The school site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services.

6. The school maintains documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations.

7. All professional staff actively engage parents and families as partners in each student's education and reach out specifically to those families who have been less connected with the school.

8. The school develops productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning.

Conclusions:

The community and the district's governing body provide insufficient funding for a wide range of school programs and services, professional and support staff, and ongoing professional development and curriculum revision while providing limited funding for a full range of technology support, equipment, instructional materials, and supplies. The proposed budget for FY15 is $13,495,099 with the Ware Junior Senior High School (WJSHS) budget at $4,170,546. Sixty-five percent of the budget is state funded and thirty-five percent of the budget is locally funded. The overall budget trend for the Ware Public School District from 2010 to 2015 is an increase of approximately 19.4 percent, with an overall increase in WJSHS's allotment of $1,159,965 (38.5 percent). Even with this increase, according to the most recent (FY13) state per pupil expenditure data, Ware ranks 233rd out of 324 reporting districts with an average per pupil expenditure of $12,536.95, which is considerably below the Massachusetts state average of $14,021.14. In September 2006, the district consulted with The Management Solution (TMS) Consultants to manage its budget. While a few classes such as Computer Aided Design (CAD), drama, 7th and 8th grade Spanish classes, and 7th grade reading classes have been added since then, other course offerings such as some core history and English courses and elective courses in French, family and computer science, health and junior high school art have been eliminated as a result of budget constraints. Parents, students, and faculty members express the desire to have more elective courses offered at WJSHS, and the principal would like to add a budget line specifically for the staffing of elective classes. In addition, the school would like to revise the school schedule to incorporate opportunities for formal collaboration among faculty members, but according to the principal this would require adding several additional staff members. The money that regularly leaves the district to fund school choice for students opting to attend schools outside the district also adversely affects the number of electives that can be offered. The principal and superintendent have recently campaigned to publicize the advantages of attending public schools in the Ware district with the hope that more students will stay in-district and thus allow the money that would otherwise go to other districts to be used to support the educational program in Ware. In order to give more students additional options, the budget continues to provide financing for Virtual High School (VHS). Off-campus dual enrollment is also now offered through Holyoke Community and Springfield Technical Community Colleges and is partially supported by the district. As another cost saving measure, some students who would previously have been sent out-of-district to private day schools now attend school on-campus. The district has a contract with the Center School to oversee the Structured Learning Center (SLC), where both students on Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) and regular education students are instructed in a therapeutic classroom setting. The number of faculty members has changed frequently between 2004 and 2015, and in 2014-2015, the position of school librarian was reduced from full-time to part-time. While the position was restored for 2015-2016, this is illustrative of the fact that funding for essential staff members is not dependable from year to year. It should also be noted that for the 2015-2016 school year, a half-time CAD teacher and a new 7th grade teacher were added. Ware does not employ any full-time administrators to lead the development and revision of curriculum for the district, and while it does contract with an outside consultant to oversee all professional development and curriculum for the district for fifteen hours per week, both administrators and faculty members report that this is insufficient to provide the leadership needed to revise and align all curriculum documents. There is no budget line for professional development (PD), with the result that all professional development must be grant-funded. The teachers' contract provides for reimbursement of college course work, on a first come, first served basis, with a cap of $25,000, but there are conflicting reports about the availability of funds for teachers to attend individualized workshops. While the teacher contract allows teachers to take one professional development day per year, only payment for a substitute is guaranteed, although the effort is made to find funding to pay individual teachers to attend workshops that are directly aligned to district initiatives. Teachers also noted that, in the past, the Ware School District has partnered with neighboring towns to offer a wider selection of professional development opportunities, but this no longer occurs. Technology support has

been affected by the inadequate budget increases. From FY06 through FY15, there have been two full-time technology support personnel. Currently, there is a district technology director and a district IT support technician providing technology support to all three Ware public schools and the central office including the maintenance of approximately 600 computers district-wide. Staff members submit service tickets to the technology department when they have a problem, but as a result of the heavy workload, the technology support staff is not always available to respond right away. Recently a significant number of computers has been purchased largely as a result of the need to administer the *Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers* (PARCC) assessments and the need to replace old equipment. There are approximately 250 computers at WJSHS, many of which have been recently upgraded. There is a new CAD lab and most student computer labs have been replaced within the past couple of years. Two laptop carts are available in the district. Wired Internet access has been increased and Wi-Fi has been installed; although Wi-Fi is only being used on a limited basis as the number of wireless access points in the school is insufficient. Teachers and students stated that students have ample access to computers through the labs. Students can only use cell phones as a means to access data with special permission, as school regulations prohibit students from using them in class. Online support for some textbooks is not available as a result of their age. The school creatively solicits funding to increase technology and other equipment; for example, it holds tag sales to purchase technology and uses grants such as a grant to support the acquisition of equipment. The math department has been able to provide each teacher with both a document camera and a mimeo from a grant. Some teachers would like to see the program to supply classrooms with SMARTBoards in elementary and middle school classrooms extended to the high school. The few graphing calculators owned by the math department are made available only to students in the AP Statistics and the Honors Calculus classes, with scientific calculators available for all other math classes. In the music program, funding for instructional equipment has been inconsistent between 2010 and 2015 and musical instruments and the sound system are in need of being updated while the spotlights on the stage are in need of repair. The Ware Public Schools' website has recently been redesigned and vastly improved, and parents can sign up for access to monitor their children's grades. Teachers and staff members now have the ability to print from their classroom computer to any copier in the building. Funding for instructional materials and supplies increased minimally between 2010 and 2015, and the need for supplies varies greatly between departments. The library budget allotment covers books, periodicals, and all other supplies and, while the librarian indicates that there have been materials requested by teachers that are not available in the WJSHS library, the library has recently received ample funding. The science department indicates that it has sufficient materials and supplies, while the math department was able to buy new textbooks for 7th and 8th grade in 2014 and is currently looking for a new algebra text aligned to the Common Core. On the other hand, the Spanish department has asked for new textbooks, but the request was denied when the quote was deemed too high, and the department also has requested technological updates to enrich the curriculum. The psychology teacher would like updated textbooks and a document camera so that he can project updated statistical data for students to analyze. New textbooks are also needed in English language arts (ELA) and in computer classes and special education classes. Many teachers do recognize that it is unreasonable to expect all of their needs to be met. The budget for athletic materials has had a significant increase between 2010 and 2015 in an attempt to make up for years of inadequate funding. However, even with this increase each athlete still must pay a user fee of $100 per sport, and the Athletic Booster Club raises funds to supplement the athletic budget and to provide fundraising opportunities for students who cannot afford the user fee. Unless the district's governing authority is able to provide consistent, recurring and dependable sources of funding for staffing, professional development, and technology, the school will be unable to offer a wide range of programs and enrich the existing curriculum and instructional practices and adequately support all of its students in achieving the 21st century learning expectations established by the school community. (self-study, building administrators, Community Resources Standard Subcommittee, teachers, students, central office personnel, facility tour)

The school adequately develops, plans, and funds programs to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant; to properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment; and to keep the school clean on a daily basis. The school maintenance department staffing is sufficient. Presently, seven full-time members are on the maintenance staff. One of the five full-time day staff is in charge of the district's grounds and athletic fields, and is also in charge of snow removal as well as indoor repair projects during the winter months. One custodian works during the school day and three custodians work from 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. The custodial staff provides an exceptionally high level of cleanliness for the buildings and grounds. The director of buildings and grounds provides safety training for the maintenance staff annually. Written schedules track daily work. The director of buildings and grounds keeps a written history of the maintenance completed and also keeps track of the changing of filters and the oiling and greasing of pumps for machinery. The boilers are eighteen years old and have numerous issues including leaks. The air quality is good even though the classroom vents occasionally get stuck. The temperature in the building is recorded as fairly consistent by the director of buildings and grounds but inconsistent by many staff members. There is limited storage area for the maintenance staff. Although in the past, the director of buildings and grounds had a contingency line in the budget for repair and replacement of equipment, that budget line no longer exists. On the whole, the efforts to clean and maintain the building contribute to the positive school environment. (self-study, facility tour, director of buildings and grounds)

The community partially funds and the school somewhat implements long-range plans that address programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements. The goals of the School Improvement Plan focus on parent communication, full school-wide implementation of the John Collins Writing System, increased SAT participation, and the establishment of a junior high mentoring program while the District Improvement Plan focuses on improving curriculum and instruction. The district does not produce a document that predicts changes in student enrollment and plans for future staffing needs. According to the director of buildings and grounds, records are kept in the director's office regarding facility needs; however, no formal long-range plan for this exists. The District Technology Plan is a three-year plan as required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), but it is a very fluid document based on immediate technology needs. This year, mostly through grant funding, the school's technology was upgraded significantly through a major purchase of computers to outfit several computer labs and some much needed improvements in the technology infrastructure. The town of Ware has a capital improvement plan that includes a section for the capital improvement needs of the Ware School District. However, at least for this year, the line items in the plan are not related to the needs at WJSHS, primarily the urgent need to replace the leaky gymnasium roof which has led over a number of years to frequent flooding in the gymnasium from both rainfall and melting snow. Only when the community plans for and provides funding to meet future needs in areas related to staffing needs and capital improvements can the school ensure that it will be able to sustain programs that enable all students to meet the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, District Technology Plan, central office personnel, facility tour, teachers, principal)

The faculty has an appropriate role in the development of the budget while building administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget. The school committee has recently shifted to developing a needs-based budget in place of the previous level-funded budgets. According to the in-school survey conducted prior to the NEASC visit, 75 percent of the faculty agree that teachers have appropriate input in the budget process. Department heads annually submit budget request forms to the principal as a standard part of the budget process, and furthermore all teachers can submit their own budget request forms directly to the principal. Each budget request made must contain clear justifications for the requested items and must be based on a documented need. The principal evaluates each request and includes most of them in his proposed budget; for example, last year he only

denied two of these budget requests. The principal then delivers his budget to the superintendent and the school committee, who share the responsibility of presenting a needs-based budget to the town selectmen. Factors that influence the school's budgeted allotment include the costs of school choice (which have often been significant), enrollment variations related to a transient population, and what the town perceives that it can afford to pay for education. The school committee has unsuccessfully tried budget overrides when it feels that it has made a strong case for funding needs not met by the town. District leadership believes that the recent attempt at a budget override brought a great deal of awareness by the citizens of Ware concerning the needs of the school. After receiving the school's allotment for the school year, the principal communicates to the faculty how much funding is available (usually through department heads) and resolves the allotment with his budget proposal. The current superintendent provides the principal with the autonomy to make these determinations. The involvement of the school community in the budget process allows the school to prioritize its requests based on its core value and beliefs and enables the school to communicate the school's needs and priorities to the WJSHS community, the superintendent, the school committee, and the town of Ware. (self-study, in-school survey, building administrators, teachers, Community Resources Standard Subcommittee, central office personnel)

The school site and plant adequately support the delivery of school programs and services. Ware Junior Senior High School is an excellent educational facility. The Endicott survey shows that the vast majority of both students and staff (70 percent) and parents (81 percent) are pleased with how well the facility meets the needs of educational programs and services. The school has six science laboratories (four with separate storage closets) and its own science and technology computer room. The school has three other computer labs for general classroom use. The auditorium has ample space for entire school assemblies. The gymnasium has three separate stations with four separate locker rooms, an athletic training room, and a weight room. The guidance area has three offices and two conference rooms which can be used for a variety of purposes. The nurse has a large office with separate bathrooms that lock, areas for private consultations, and locked dispensary rooms. Each regular education teacher has her or his own classroom, and the large classroom spaces facilitate a wide range of instructional configurations to meet the diverse needs of learners. There is also ample space to house the LEAP and SLC programs. Four athletic fields on campus are used for both outdoor gym classes and interscholastic competitions. The school has safe and secure parking available, and new sensor lights have been added to save money and at the same time improve safety. The cafeteria and kitchen areas are clean and well-maintained and able to handle the school population, although the kitchen can be extremely warm. While the main office, the library media center, the guidance area, and some classrooms are always comfortable, some classrooms are uncomfortably cold during the winter months and very warm on late summer and spring days. Nevertheless, the many strengths of the facility provide the opportunity for a variety of high quality school programs and services that support the academic and social needs of all WJSHS students. (self-study, student shadowing, facility tour, students, teachers, Community Resources Standard Subcommittee meeting, Endicott survey)

The school maintains documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. All fire alarms and extinguishers are tested and checked regularly and records are maintained. The school is properly ventilated and the filters are changed every three months. The nurse keeps detailed electronic health records. The director of buildings and grounds catalogs all chemicals on a material and safety data sheet and works with the science department to ensure that chemicals are stored and properly disposed. Safety equipment in science labs, including the safety shower and eyewash, are tested yearly and the elevator is checked and certified annually. The school's diligence in meeting all federal, state, and local safety regulations plays a major role in establishing an environment in which all members of the school community feel safe. (self-study, safety inspection documents, director of buildings and grounds, facility tour)

The school actively engages many parents and families as partners in each student's education and occasionally reaches out specifically to those families who have been less connected with the school. WJSHS has been successful in engaging many parents of students through involvement in a number of the school's co-curricular activities, including school band, student council, National Honor Society, National Art Honor Society, National Junior Honor Society, Parent Teacher Student Spirit Association (PTSSA), As Schools Match Wits, and the athletic boosters club. The school also has an annual open house in September, which allows the parents to meet their children's teachers, and to hear the teachers' descriptions and overviews of their courses. The school makes a great deal of information available on its website (www.wareps.org), including information concerning the school calendar, the school improvement plan, upcoming sporting and other school-related events, MCAS and bus schedules, school news, and the principal's blog. To supplement the announcements posted on the marquee at the front of the school campus and on the school's website, parents receive individual reminders about upcoming events through Connect Ed, a database with each child's home telephone number. Both the school committee and central office administrators state that they have an open door policy for all parents. The student handbook is made available to families electronically, and provides parents and students with information about school rules, eligibility requirements, as well as other school and district rules and policies. The school has implemented iParent on the school's website which allows parents the ability to monitor their children's academic progress. Teachers regularly update their grades on the site and parents receive progress reports at the halfway point of each marking term. As the school year progresses, teachers contact parents by email or phone when a student is demonstrating academic or behavioral difficulties. The guidance department will schedule team meetings with parents and teachers for students who are struggling socially or academically. Despite these successful activities, the Endicott survey results reported that about one in seven families believe that the school does not do enough to reach out to them. Although there are many students whose families have lived in town for generations, there is also a large population of transient families resulting from the number of low income housing available in Ware. Teachers' efforts to contact these parents by both telephone and email are not always successful as some parents do not have email and changes in phone numbers are sometimes not reported to the school. In cases where these efforts to contact parents have failed, both school counselors and Structured Learning Center (SLC) staff members regularly travel to student homes to reach out to parents. Only when the school is fully able to engage all families as partners in their children's education will all students be able to receive the full support of a vital component in contributing to their school success. (self-study, school committee, central office personnel, Community Resources Standard Subcommittee, teachers, guidance counselors, Endicott survey)

The school actively develops productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning. Both the PTSSA and Junior PTSSA parent groups are small but extremely active and develop, organize, and raise funds for a number of events during the school year. In addition, some parents serve as club advisors, coaches, chaperones, and internship hosts for seniors. Parents are elected by their peers to become members on the School Council and thus participate in establishing the annual School Improvement Plan. The school's booster club is also very active and proves financial support to the various athletic teams and pays the "pay to play" fee for individual student-athletes who would not otherwise be able to participate in the athletics program. Over the years, WJSHS has worked to develop both formal and informal productive business and community partnerships that support student learning and provide internship opportunities. Examples of these partnerships are Girls' Eye View, the Domestic Violence Task Force (which is linked to the town-based Task Force and the Hampshire County District Attorney's office), the Carson Center for Human Services, Country Bank, Wickabog Veterinary Clinic, Quabbin Wire, Big Y, Ware Police Department, Bay State Mary Lane Hospital, and the River West School-to-Career Partnership. Classrooms, clubs, and high school student advisories also connect to the community and local businesses in a variety of ways. For

example, Country Bank frequently provides instruction on financial literacy as part of the business curriculum, and the technology class works closely with Babson Capital Management Systems Department to provide job opportunity discussions in the career field of computer science. The students in the LEAP program also participate in job opportunities in the community. The student council is very active in Special Olympics and the Domestic Violence Advisory group partners with the American Red Cross to hold blood drives in the gymnasium. The National Honor Society volunteers with the Salvation Army during the holiday season. The Drug and Alcohol Awareness Advisory has participated for three years in a row in the District Attorney's annual Conference to Prevent Underage Drinking and a number of groups support the local food pantry. Community service has been a hallmark of the student council, the Leadership Council, the National Honor Society, the National Junior Honor Society, and some of the high school advisory groups even though community service is not a graduation requirement. WJSHS also maintains partnerships with institutes of higher learning, including early college and dual enrollment programs with both Holyoke and Springfield Technical Community Colleges. However, there is a need for more partnerships that support students who do not plan on attending college. A business and civic committee in Ware partners with the school district to support and advocate for education and education funding. The school's many partnerships with community organizations, institutes of higher education, and local businesses serve to enrich the educational program, provide needed resources, support student learning, and reflect the core values, beliefs and expectations of the entire school community. (self-study, school committee, parents, students, Community Resources Standard Subcommittee)

Commendations:

1. The recent increase in technology to support student learning and achievement
2. The exceptional level of cleanliness of the school facility through the joint efforts of the building and grounds staff, faculty, and students
3. The engagement of the school community in the budget process
4. The ability of the school facility to provide for a wide range of services and to support the educational program at WJSHS
5. The many efforts to use technology to communicate with parents, including the development of the school's website and the implementation of iParent/Connect Ed
6. The dual enrollment opportunities for students through local community colleges
7. The dedication of parent and community partnerships to supporting the school's programs
8. The high degree of student involvement in the community

Recommendations:

1. Provide sufficient and dependable funding for a wide range of school programs and services, professional and support staff, and ongoing professional development and curriculum revision
2. Design and implement a long-range plan for staffing needs based on enrollment projections
3. Repair the gym roof
4. Provide more consistent temperature control throughout the building
5. Create partnerships with local businesses for non-college bound students to provide them with hands-on-training and school-to career opportunities

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 Ware Junior/Senior 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 Committee requires that the evaluation report be made public in accordance with the Committee'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 Committee 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 Committee requires that the principal of Ware Junior/Senior 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 Committee 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 Committee 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 Committee has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Committee within sixty days (60) of occurrence any substantive change which negatively impacts on the school's adherence to the Committee's Standards for Accreditation. The report of substantive change must describe the change itself and detail any impact which the change has had on the school's ability to meet the Standards for Accreditation. The Committee's Substantive Change Policy is included in the Appendix on page xx. 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 Committee office has current statistical data on the school.

The Committee 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 Committee'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 Committee staff following the on-site visit.

The visiting committee expresses its appreciation for the hospitality provided by the entire staff at Ware Junior/Senior High School as well as its thanks to the steering committee, the self-study standards committees, the School Committee, teachers, parents, and students who willingly provided us with the information and feedback necessary to write this report. Special thanks to the principal and the

superintendent for the considerable amount of time they devoted to providing feedback and answering our many questions and to the steering committee chairs for their outstanding efforts to meet our needs during the visit.

Ware Junior/Senior High School
NEASC Accreditation Visit
September 27-30, 2015

Visiting Committee

John Keogh, Chair Commission on Public Secondary Schools Burlington, MA 01803	Chris Henry Marlborough High School Marlborough , MA 01752
Maureen Sabolinski, Assistant Chair Franklin Public Schools Franklin, MA 02038	Jen McCaughey Charles E. Shea Senior High School Pawtucket, RI 02860
Judi Bohail Hopkins Academy Hadley, MA 01035	Sean O'Connor David Prouty High School Spencer, MA 01562
Domenico Casolari Suffield High School West Suffield, CT 06093	Michelle Ott Canton High School Canton, CT 06019
Cathy Croteau Windham High School Windham, NH 03087	Ryan Ruopp F. W. Parker Charter Essential School Devens, MA 01434
Jane Greenleaf Murdock High School Winchendon, MA 01475	Brian Tedeschi Parish Hill Middle/Senior High School Chaplin, CT 06235

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

Committee on Public Secondary Schools

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

Principals of member schools must report to the Committee 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 Committee's Standards for Accreditation. The report of a substantive change must describe the change itself as well as detail the impact on the school's ability to meet the Standards. The following are potential areas where there might be negative substantive changes which must be reported:

- elimination of fine arts, practical arts and student activities

- diminished upkeep and maintenance of facilities

- significantly decreased funding

- cuts in the level of administrative and supervisory staffing

- cuts in the number of teachers and/or guidance counselors

- grade level responsibilities of the principal

- cuts in the number of support staff

- decreases in student services

- cuts in the educational media staffing

- increases in student enrollment that cannot be accommodated

- takeover by the state

- inordinate user fees

- changes in the student population that warrant program or staffing modification(s) that cannot be accommodated, e.g., the number of special needs students or vocational students or students with limited English proficiency

Ware Junior/Senior High School

Commendations

<u>Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations</u>

1. The solicitation of feedback from all stakeholders to create an inclusive statement of the school's core values and beliefs
2. The strong commitment of teachers and students to the spirit of the school's core values
3. The implementation of programs such as the advisory program, Collins Writing System and LEAP program as reflective of WJSHS core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations as they inform the school culture
4. The school's efforts to create and review analytic rubrics for each of the school's academic, civic, and social learning expectations

<u>Curriculum</u>

1. The use of a common format for curriculum that includes essential questions as well as content and skills
2. The authentic learning opportunities provided by the advisory, LEAP, and co-curricular programs
3. The curriculum improvements made in the mathematics and ELA curricula as a result of recent curriculum revisions
4. The provisions made to ensure that all students are well-versed in the ethical use of technology
5. The willingness of some teachers to voluntarily take on the task of performing necessary curriculum revisions in the absence of sufficient time and resources

<u>Instruction</u>

1. The instructional practices of many teachers that actively engage students in their learning
2. The initiative to use peer observation as an effective form of professional development for the specific purpose of improving instruction
3. The frequent use of feedback from a wide variety of sources, including feedback from students, to improve instructional practices
4. The frequent use of purposefully organized group activities and provision of additional supports to meet the learning needs of all students
5. The efforts of teachers to maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices

<u>Assessment of and for Student Learning</u>

1. The effective use of online grade reporting to keep students and their parents informed about student progress in their courses

2. The regular use of rubrics to communicate teacher expectations about course assignments to all students
3. The consistent use of teacher and peer feedback to students for the purpose of improving student performance in the visual and performing arts department
4. The use of MCAS and other standardized test data for a variety of purposes related to curriculum revision, instructional practices, and student placement
5. The adaptation of the John Collins Writing System for Type 1 and Type 2 on-demand student writing samples as a school-wide assessment that is used formatively to improve student writing
6. The use of technology by some English and math teachers to collect instant data that can inform instruction

School Culture and Leadership

1. The dedication of all staff members who strive daily to build a supportive school culture in which students feel cared for, safe, and respected
2. The vibrant advisory program that provides each high school student the opportunity to connect with an adult in the school other than the guidance counselor
3. The social studies department which offers core courses that ensure that virtually all students have opportunities to learn with their peers in a heterogeneous setting
4. The laser focus of the school's efforts to improve student writing across the school
5. The omnipresent instructional leadership provided by the principal in support of teaching and learning
6. The collaborative relationship among the principal, superintendent, and members of the school committee to work together on behalf of all WJSHS students
7. The autonomy and authority provided to the principal to make decisions aligned to the school's priorities and to its core values and beliefs

School Resources for Learning

1. The timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for students, including identified and at-risk students that support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations
2. The support to at-risk students through both in-school programs and through collaboration with state and local human service agencies
3. Opportunities for students to recover credits through grant-funded online classes either after school or during the summer under the supervision of a WJSHS teacher
4. The effectiveness of health services in meeting the needs of WJSHS students
5. The efforts of the counseling staff to meet the needs of students in spite of large caseloads
6. The measures currently being taken to improve the delivery of library/media services to all students
7. The many ways in which the school provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services

Community Resources for Learning

1. The recent increase in technology to support student learning and achievement

2. The exceptional level of cleanliness of the school facility through the joint efforts of the building and grounds staff, faculty, and students
3. The engagement of the school community in the budget process
4. The ability of the school facility to provide for a wide range of services and to support the educational program at WJSHS
5. The many efforts to use technology to communicate with parents, including the development of the school's website and the implementation of iParent/Connect Ed
6. The dual enrollment opportunities for students through local community colleges
7. The dedication of parent and community partnerships to supporting the school's programs
8. The high degree of student involvement in the community

Recommendations

Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

1. Ensure that the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in all classrooms and guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations
2. Develop and implement a dynamic process to review and revise the school's statement of core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations that is informed by multiple data sources including the achievement of the school's learning expectations and by current research on 21st century learning expectations
3. Communicate to all stakeholders the role of the school-wide analytic rubrics and indicate how and when they are used to measure targeted student achievement outcomes

Curriculum

1. Integrate the school's 21st century learning expectations into the curriculum documents in all subject areas
2. Design and implement a curriculum revision cycle that includes a thorough and consistent process for curricular analysis, development, and revision and provide for the time, personnel, and financial resources to adequately support this process
3. Include instructional strategies and assessment strategies that include the use of school-wide rubrics in all curriculum documents
4. Ensure that curriculum documents in all subject areas emphasize higher order thinking, depth of understanding, and application of knowledge through inquiry and problem solving
5. Include more opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration in the curriculum
6. Provide sufficient staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, and equipment to implement the full curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities
7. Provide the leadership in curriculum development necessary to ensure that curricular coordination and vertical articulation exist between and among all academic areas within th

Instruction

1. Examine instructional practices to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations
2. Develop and implement a process to ensure that all teachers frequently emphasize inquiry, problem solving, higher order thinking, and the application of knowledge and skills to authentic tasks
3. Increase both student and teacher use of technology for instructional purposes by continuing to upgrade available technology and by providing professional development opportunities in the instructional use of technology
4. Provide more formal opportunities for teachers to collaborate to improve instructional practices, to review and discuss current research related to instructional practices, and to increase opportunities for cross-disciplinary lessons
5. Increase professional development opportunities to support differentiated instruction and the effective use of instructional time in a block schedule

Assessment of and for Student Learning

1. Develop and implement a formal process based on school-wide rubrics to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
2. Communicate the school's progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to all WJSHS stakeholders
3. Increase the use of assessment data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement
4. Communicate to students prior to each unit of study the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific goals to be assessed
5. Increase the development and implementation of common course assessments in all departments
6. Revise and implement common grading and reporting practices rooted in research-based practices to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning

School Culture and Leadership

1. Provide more formal opportunities for faculty to collaborate on developing common lessons and assessments, sharing instructional practices, and engaging in productive discourse about teaching and learning
2. Ensure that students have ample opportunity to enroll in heterogeneously grouped core courses over the course of their high school experience and provide teachers with professional development in strategies for teaching these courses
3. Re-examine the school schedule through the lens of the school's core values and beliefs and make the revisions necessary to best serve the needs of all students and ensure professional collaboration among teachers
4. Design and implement a formal ongoing professional development plan that supports the school's 21st century learning expectations
5. Create clearly defined roles for teachers, students, and parents to be involved in meaningful decision-making that promotes responsibility and ownership

School Resources for Learning

1. Increase the use of technology to improve the delivery of student support services
2. Design and implement a developmental guidance curriculum
3. Include the library media specialist in curriculum development and integration
4. Design and implement a formal method to evaluate support services offered through the guidance department and the library/media center
5. Ensure that the school continues to provide a full-time librarian to serve the learning needs of its students
6. Provide the necessary leadership to ensure the adequate supervision and coordination of special education services

Community Resources for Learning

1. Provide sufficient and dependable funding for a wide range of school programs and services, professional and support staff, and ongoing professional development and curriculum revision
2. Design and implement a long-range plan for staffing needs based on enrollment projections
3. Repair the gym roof
4. Provide more consistent temperature control throughout the building
5. Create partnerships with local businesses for non-college bound students to provide them with hands-on-training and school-to career opportunities