

New England Association of Schools and Colleges



Commission on Public Secondary Schools

Report of the Visiting Committee for Lexington High School

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New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.

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STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS

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

The Commission on Public Secondary Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, located in Bedford, Massachusetts, considers this visiting committee report of Lexington High School to be a privileged document submitted by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges to the principal of the school and by the principal to the state department of education. Distribution of the report within the school community is the responsibility of the school principal. The final visiting committee report must be released in its entirety within sixty (60) days 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 Lexington High School in terms of the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. Neither the total program nor any of its subsections is to be considered an evaluation of any individual staff member, but rather a professional appraisal of the school as it appeared to the visiting team.

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

Teaching and Learning Standards

- Mission and Expectations for Student Learning
- Curriculum
- Instruction

Assessment of Student Learning

Support of Teaching and Learning Standards

Leadership and Organization

School Resources for Learning

Community Resources for Learning

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

Preparation for the Evaluation Visit – the School Self-Study

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At Lexington High School a committee that included 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 Lexington High School extended over a period of twenty school months from September 2006 to March 2008. The visiting committee was pleased to note that students, parents, and school committee members joined the professional staff in the self-study deliberations.

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

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

The Process Used by the Visiting Committee

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

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

- A review of the school's self-study materials
- 51 hours shadowing 17 students
- a total of 55 hours of classroom observations (in addition to the time shadowing students)
- numerous informal observations in and around the school
- tours of the facility
- individual meetings with 34 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and the assessment of student learning
- group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers
- the examination of student work including a selection of work collected by the school.

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

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

Overview of Findings

Although the conclusions of the visiting committee on the school's adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation appear in various sections of this report, the committee wishes to highlight some findings in the paragraphs that follow. These

findings are not intended to be a summary of the report.

Teaching and Learning at Lexington High School

Lexington High School's mission statement represents the school community's fundamental values and beliefs about student learning, and this is reflected in many aspects of the school culture. The mission's emphasis on encouraging student effort, building knowledge, and supporting imagination is borne out in the school's rigorous academic programs and rich extracurricular offerings. However, the mission also emphasizes the development of healthy students in a supportive environment, and the faculty members and students struggle to promote a balance between this value and the community's expectations that Lexington High School will prepare students for entrance to the most highly selective colleges and universities.

Also inherent in the Lexington High School Mission Statement and Expectations for Student Learning is the belief that students must become independent thinkers who make appropriate life choices. Connected to this belief is a strong school culture that promotes teacher autonomy and independence. As a consequence of these values and beliefs, students and teachers at Lexington High School are given a great deal of freedom and expected to take responsibility for their choices. While this informal structure works well for many students, others struggle with the open campus arrangement. Academically able and motivated students thrive in this rich and challenging atmosphere; a few students may remove themselves physically or emotionally by repeatedly coming late, unchallenged, to class, sleeping in class, or remaining passive while their peers are actively engaged in learning.

Faculty members at Lexington High School make themselves available to students before and after school and during planning periods. This extraordinary effort to work with students individually appears to be the main way teachers at Lexington High School differentiate to meet the needs of students who fall behind or need monitoring or enrichment; little in-class differentiation of instruction is visible in typical academic classes. Over-reliance on out-of-class extra help sessions limits some students' opportunities to learn in ways that meet their learning styles and needs.

Teachers at Lexington High School feel a great deal of pressure to expose students to rigorous course content in order to prepare them for standardized tests. This pressure is reinforced by their students' stellar performances: Lexington is at or near the top when measured against other public schools in Massachusetts and in the nation on nearly every measure of standardized test performance. While this content-focused instruction works well for some students, others who may not be college-bound or who are not test-focused learners have fewer options in Lexington and opportunities for interdisciplinary planning and courses are limited by an over-reliance on specific content-focused courses.

The school's academic expectations are ambitious, clear, and well-supported by newly-developed school-wide rubrics. However, the school's structure works against supporting the level of collaboration needed to implement these rubrics on a school-wide basis, despite requests by school administrators to do so. Curriculum maps, developed in preparation for the NEASC visit, are similarly in need of review and revision to ensure that course content is clearly connected to essential questions, that instructional strategies match learning goals, and that a variety of appropriate assessments is developed to measure what students have learned.

Plans for increasing teacher collaboration through implementation of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model are in the early stages at the school. While this proposal holds promise, the school culture of strong teacher autonomy and the expansive school campus with subject-specific buildings presents challenges to implementation of the PLC. Teachers at Lexington High School have begun to work towards developing and using common assessments, looking at student work, and selecting exemplars that illustrate levels of proficiency. Continuation of this work through the PLC model will help to support improved curriculum and instruction and enhanced student achievement, especially for students who may be marginalized under the current system. The school also recognizes the need for increased levels of training for teachers in the implementation of standards-based teaching and learning.

Instructional materials, equipment, supplies, and staffing levels are generally adequate to meet the school's needs. However, the use of technology to support teaching and learning is inadequate, especially given the community's expectations that students will be prepared for the 21st century. Embedded in the school's Mission and Expectations for Learning is the requirement for students to master both the use of technology and research skills, and the current level of technology does not adequately support these expectations.

Support for Teaching and Learning at Lexington High School

The principal of Lexington High School uses an inclusive, reflective style of leadership that supports the inclusion of a wide variety of stakeholders. While this principal is slated to retire at the conclusion of the 2007-2008 academic year, the structure and culture of the school supports continued teacher leadership and inclusive decision-making. While this approach has many advantages, it also makes decision-making a lengthy and sometimes contentious process at the school.

The school district has taken a courageous stance by identifying a significant achievement gap through the work of the Achievement Gap Task Force at the school based on underperformance of African-American and Hispanic students as compared with that of Caucasian and Asian students. However, the grouping patterns, instructional strategies, and support service issues that work against the success of some students have not yet been addressed concretely at Lexington High School. While the district has begun to develop and implement plans to address this gap through the

work of the Achievement Gap Task Force, this is not yet evident in daily practice, grouping patterns, or instructional practices at the school.

While the school has no formal student mentoring program, students generally express a feeling of connection to Lexington High School and cite close relationships with counselors, teachers, coaches, and advisors. The climate of Lexington High School is safe, positive, and supportive, and students evidence school pride and satisfaction. Student success is regularly celebrated in a variety of ways and venues.

In general, parents are also very active in school affairs, although there is a perception by some faculty members that parents may have unreasonable expectations for teacher communication and this is seen as significant source of stress. The level of parent involvement and support is not generally matched by the wider business and higher education community of Lexington, where there are few partnerships between the school and businesses or colleges. This limits student options for out-of-school experiences.

Support services for students at Lexington High School (guidance, special education, health, and library/media) are generally of high quality and sufficiently resourced. However, some areas of challenge in the area of student services include the lack of a coordinated student intervention or support team, the lack of a comprehensive guidance curriculum that includes sufficient career planning, or a research skills library curriculum that serves the needs of older students, and the lack of a formal evaluation process for any of the student support service areas.

Despite an aging facility, the school site and plant generally support most aspects of the educational program and support services for student learning. However, some instructional spaces are outdated and not appropriate for the needs of students in the 21st century, particularly with regard to instructional technology and furniture. The school also struggles to ensure appropriate maintenance, repair, and cleanliness of the school plant. The physical upkeep and condition of the building are not in keeping with the high expectations of staff, students, and community.

School and Community Profile

Lexington High School is located near the center of Lexington, Massachusetts. First settled in 1642, the town of Lexington was incorporated in 1713. It has a rich historic past, stemming back to the Revolutionary War. Located 12 miles northwest of Boston along I-95 and Route 2, the town now functions primarily as a residential suburb of Boston and Cambridge, and the high technology corridor along I-95. Additionally, the town is home to some high-technology industry and a variety of commercial establishments. The median household income in FY2006 was \$111,899. In 2005 the unemployment rate was 3.3%, with 1.8% of the school community living below the low-income level established by the federal free and reduced price lunch program. The town population is about 30,000.

Important town features include a representative town meeting/town manager form of government. Conservation land, historical landmarks, and Lexington's rich history attract many tourists and are a source of pride to residents. Students in the town of Lexington are served by a number of private and schools and one public high school. Lexington High School had a student population of 1,988 as of October 1, 2006. The Lexington Public Schools also include six elementary schools and two middle schools, serving 6,100 students, or 93% of the town's eligible children. Students not attending the public schools may attend Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical School, Lexington Christian Academy, or the Waldorf School, all located within the town.

The Lexington school district is ranked 76 out of 335 school districts in the state in terms of per pupil expenditures. During the 2005-2006 school year the district spent \$10,543 per pupil, compared to the state average of \$9,096. In fiscal year 2006, 64% of the town budget was dedicated to the support of the schools.

The student population at Lexington High School has remained relatively stable for the past several years, although there is expected to be some marginal growth in the future. About 62 students (3% of the LHS population) who are residents of the city of Boston attend LHS as part of the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) program.

The school has the following ethnic and racial make-up: 75% White students, 17% Asian students, 3.2% Hispanic white students, 3% African American students, and less than 2% of students in other categories. While English is the primary language for 85% of the school population, other primary languages include Chinese (6%), Korean (3%), Eastern European languages (2%), Western European languages (2%), Indian languages (1%) and other languages (1%).

The average student attendance rate in 2005-2006 was 97%, which is typical of recent years. The average drop-out rate for 2005-2006 was 2.6%. In the class of 2006, 98.82% of

the students graduated. In the 2005-2006 school year there were 345 failing grades issued, and less than 1% of students were retained in a grade level. No students were expelled from the school in 2005-2006; the total number of out-of-school suspensions was 74.

There are 195 teachers at LHS, creating an overall students-teaching ratio of 10:1. Individual teachers carry an average load of 104 students with an average class size of 22.3, although many teachers carry five classes and the 125 students. The average daily attendance of teachers in 2005-2006 was 97%. 85% of LHS teachers have at least a master's degree, and 10% have doctoral degrees. Currently, 24 teachers hold preliminary certifications, 57 have initial certifications, and 109 hold professional certifications.

The LHS schedule is a five-day, thirty-two block schedule with blocks ranging in length from 45 to 55 minutes. Most academic classes meet for four blocks each week for a full year, while science classes meet either five blocks per week or six blocks per week. Few teachers of the same course have common planning time.

Some courses at LHS are leveled while others are heterogeneously grouped. The multi-disciplinary support team (MST) serves as a small learning community for students with social and/or emotional issues that impact their ability to access some portion of the curriculum. All LHS students are required to perform 40 hours of community service. More than half of the students enroll in at least one heterogeneously grouped class.

LHS offers co-curricular activities for its students, including a wide range of athletic programs, a variety of intramural sports programs, music, theatre, competitive academic teams, and special interest clubs. In 2006-2007 LHS had a total of 88 clubs with 1,118 student members and an average of 528 students per season participating on athletic teams.

LHS graduates typically pursue post-secondary studies. In the class of 2006 88% of the students went on to four-year colleges, while 5% went on to two-year colleges, and 7% chose other options.

LHS students perform well on standardized assessments. In 2005-2006 451 students took the SAT, earning average scores of Verbal 611, Math 629, and Writing 613. In the class of 2005, 67 students received National Merit Scholarship Letters of Commendation, while 17 students were semi-finalists, 15 were finalists, and two were deemed National Achievement Outstanding Participants. LHS students take Advanced Placement tests in 24 subjects. LHS students consistently score well on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests.

Mission Statement of Lexington High School

Approved April 2006

Lexington High School is a learning community committed to developing well-educated, healthy, and engaged students in a respectful, safe, supportive environment. We encourage the effort and imagination necessary to acquire knowledge and develop academic habits of mind. We maintain our high expectations with a challenging and varied curriculum, inspired by curiosity, enriched by clubs and activities. At the same time we emphasize the need to reduce unhealthy stress and unproductive competition in pursuit of balanced lives. We honor diversity and individual achievement; we promote collaboration and community service. Together we strive to model behavior that will help make our campus a microcosm of the world we hope to create.

The faculty, staff, and administration of Lexington High School, with the support of parents and the community, are committed to helping students achieve the following academic, social, and civic expectations:

Academic Expectations

Students at Lexington High School will

- write clearly and effectively, producing work that is informative, well organized, and appropriate for its purpose and audience.
- read and comprehend varied materials and be able to interpret and apply what they have read.
- listen actively and respond to communications through inquiry, discussion, writing, and various forms of art.
- speak clearly and effectively in a variety of contexts, including academic discourse and oral presentations.
- gather data and critically evaluate their content, source, and relevance.
- reason logically, using appropriate qualitative or quantitative methods, and use their analysis to answer questions and solve problems.
- employ technology to gather, organize, and communicate information, to create and share visual images, and to investigate and solve problems.
- demonstrate an understanding of the political, social, cultural, and scientific contexts of knowledge.
- demonstrate practical applications of knowledge.
- Demonstrate awareness of aesthetic principles, such as theme, motif, pattern, and symmetry.

Social and Civic Expectations

Students at Lexington High School will

- learn to make appropriate and healthy choices that foster their personal well being, and will seek support when needed for academic, social, physical, mental, and emotional issues.
- demonstrate self-awareness, tolerance, and respect while cultivating social skills that reflect self-assurance, kindness, and tact.
- act with integrity and be accountable to themselves, to the school, and to the community at large.
- participate in meaningful community service activities that expand their life experiences and benefit others.
- act as responsible citizens, recognizing the important stake they have in the school community while finding constructive opportunities to influence its direction.

**COMMISSION ON
PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

**TEACHING AND LEARNING
STANDARDS**

MISSION AND EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT LEARNING
CURRICULUM
INSTRUCTION
ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

1 MISSION AND EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT LEARNING

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

1. The mission statement and expectations for student learning shall be developed by the school community and approved and supported by the professional staff, the school board, and any other school-wide governing organization.
2. The school's mission statement shall represent the school community's fundamental values and beliefs about student learning.
3. The school shall define school-wide academic, civic, and social learning expectations that:
 - are measurable;
 - reflect the school's mission.

4. For each academic expectation in the mission, the school shall have a targeted level of successful achievement identified in a rubric.
5. The school shall have indicators by which it assesses the school's progress in achieving school-wide civic and social expectations.
6. The mission statement and the school's expectations for student learning shall guide the procedures, policies, and decisions of the school and shall be evident in the culture of the school.
7. The school shall review regularly the mission statement and expectations for student learning using a variety of data to ensure that they reflect student needs, community expectations, the district mission, and state and national standards.

Conclusions:

The Lexington High School Mission Statement and Expectations for Student Learning were developed by the school community and approved by the professional staff and the school committee. The mission statement and expectations self-study committee included faculty members, students, and parents. As part of the statement's development process, the committee used the local newspaper and high school and middle school newsletters to invite input from the wider community. After final debate and discussion among the faculty members, the faculty approved the final mission and expectations for student learning in March of 2006. At the same time, the final draft was mailed to district administrators, to members of the Lexington School Committee and to all families of high school students for pre-publication comments. In March 2006, the school committee and Lexington High School Council approved the mission statement and expectations for student learning and the document's final version was published in the Lexington High School Newsletter. (self-study, panel presentation, mission and expectations committee)

Since the initial adoption, staff members of Lexington High School have worked to share its mission statement and expectations for student learning with the school community in a variety of ways. For example, the documents are discussed in the freshman guidance seminars to ensure that entering students are aware of their content and importance. In addition, they are posted on the school website and available for viewing across the school in the form of signs and student-produced artwork. The self-study survey results indicated that 91% of responding staff members was very familiar with the Lexington High School Mission and Expectations for Student Learning. In addition, 90% of responding staff members stated that the school's mission statement truly embodied their individual core values and beliefs about learning. The school's faculty members recognize that more must be done to articulate and implement these values with students and put them into place in everyday policies and procedures. As a result, the Lexington High School Mission Statement and Expectations for Student Learning describe the essence of what the school as a community of learners is seeking to achieve but has not yet fully put into practice. (self-study, parents, teachers, students, panel discussion)

Lexington High School's mission statement represents the school community's fundamental values and beliefs about student learning, and this is reflected in many elements of the school's culture. The thoughtful and inclusive process of creating the mission statement and expectations was designed to identify and formalize the shared values of the school community which emphasize the dual importance of health and building community. The Lexington High School Mission Statement also defines learning as combining three key elements: effort, knowledge, and imagination. Accordingly, teachers expect the best efforts from their students, while the school maintains very high expectations through rigorous graduation requirements and a wide

variety of challenging courses. The structure of the school schedule also supports flexible leveling that allows students to take on the highest appropriate challenge in each subject area, while a broad program of studies ensures that students have the opportunity to select classes from a wide range of academic disciplines. The high school courses and co-curricular activities encourage and engage students, and the school expects them to take responsibility for their own learning. (self-study, teachers, students, parents, panel discussion)

In addition to providing a very strong academic and co-curricular program, Lexington High School is committed to supporting the development of healthy students within a supportive environment. School personnel try to encourage students to reduce both unhealthy stress and unproductive competition and pursue more balanced lives although this is often difficult. However, this healthy living goal is sometimes in conflict with the stresses inherent in the rigorous academic program of Lexington High School and the intense pressure students feel to be accepted at highly selective colleges and universities. Teachers and administrators are aware of these unhealthy pressures and have purposefully taken measures to create a safe and supportive environment for students. For example, registered nurses are on duty during all school hours to care for students who become ill. Each Lexington High School student is also assigned the same dean, guidance counselor, and homeroom teacher for four consecutive years. Lexington High School provides a wide range of learning opportunities, both in and out of the classroom, that encourage positive participation and contribution in society, supporting the school's fundamental beliefs and values. (self-study, teachers, students, parents, panel discussion)

Lexington High School has defined school-wide academic, civic, and social expectations that are measurable and reflect the school's mission. The school community is committed to developing well-educated students who are able to meet the goals set forth in the learning expectations. The Lexington High School Expectations for Student Learning explicitly require students to develop as listeners, speakers, readers, and writers with the ability to use communication technologies. Additionally, LHS expects students to critically evaluate data, to reason logically and to defend their opinions effectively. Understanding aesthetic principles is yet another quality the school endeavors to promote. The academic expectations can be consistently measured using rubrics written by the LHS faculty, although these are not yet in widespread use. These clear and detailed performance scales have been completed for nine of the ten academic expectations, with the exception of the applied knowledge expectation. (self-study, teachers, students, parents, panel discussion)

Indicators for measuring the attainment of social and civic expectations have been completed and approved by the faculty. The social and civic expectations of LHS reflect the school's mission to develop healthy and engaged students in a respectful, safe, and supportive environment. Students are expected to become independent thinkers who are responsible to and for themselves and who make appropriate life choices. LHS has set forth an ambitious mission that strives to address the academic and emotional needs

of all its students. (self-study, teachers, parents, students)

For almost all academic expectations in the Lexington High School Mission, the school has identified a targeted level of successful achievement, in a rubric with performance levels. The Lexington High School Curriculum Cabinet established definitions and uniform guidelines for these rubrics, and the high school faculty has been involved in creating these academic rubrics at every level of development. In May 2007, the finalized versions were employed by the departments to create course and department-specific rubrics. Although LHS has these analytic rubrics that work to measure student achievement, the infrequent use of these school-wide rubrics does not yet give students the opportunity to gain a clear understanding of the school-wide targeted level of successful achievement. There remains some confusion among faculty members about how to use the rubrics to measure student achievement. Increased clarity around how to use the school-wide rubrics and performance assessment data will allow teachers to revise instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students. (program of studies, student/parent handbook, self-study, student work, students, student shadowing)

The school has indicators by which it assesses student progress in achieving recently adopted, school-wide, civic and social expectations, and professional staff members have begun to collect data to assess the success of existing programs. Continuing to identify the social and emotional needs of students and track student performance on the indicators on a regular basis will allow administrators and teachers the opportunity to focus on student achievement in a variety of venues, thereby meeting the mission of developing well-educated, healthy, engaged students. (self-study, students, student handbook, program of studies)

The Lexington High School Mission Statement and Expectations for Student Learning are beginning to guide the procedures, policies and decision-making process but are not yet embedded in the daily culture of LHS. However, the values that the mission statement embodies have provided the impetus for several important ongoing school initiatives. For example, the LHS leadership team has made a commitment to initiate the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) model to strengthen instruction and assessment, thereby improving student learning. Another mission-driven initiative is the collaboration between the ninth grade English and history teachers, which allows for clearer expectations and improved instruction for students. In addition, a decision to change to a non-weighted grade-point average (GPA) is aligned with the mission statement's commitment to reducing unhealthy competition. A clearer, publicly acknowledged connection between mission statement and expectations and procedures, policies and decision-making would ensure that LHS achieves its stated mission and expectations for all students. (teachers, self-study, parents, students, mission standard subcommittee meeting, observations)

The school has not yet adopted a plan for regular review of the mission statement and expectations for student learning. This formal process for reviewing the mission statement and expectations will ensure that the mission statement and expectations

continues to meet the needs of all students. (teachers, self-study, panel discussion, department chairs)

Commendations:

1. The thorough and inclusive process of developing and approving the mission statement and expectations for student learning
2. A mission statement that represents the school community's fundamental values and beliefs
3. The development of ambitious school-wide academic, social, and civic expectations that reflect the school's mission
4. The development of thoughtful, analytic rubrics for the academic expectations
5. The variety of performance indicators by which the LHS school community will measure its civic and social expectations
6. The use of the mission statement to guide recent decisions regarding GPA and the initiation of Professional Learning Communities

Recommendations:

1. Provide professional development regarding the use of school-wide rubrics to ensure effective implementation and to eliminate teacher confusions about intended use
2. Continue to collect and report data related to civic and social expectations in order to go beyond baseline measurement
3. Continue to assess school-wide academic expectations to ensure that they are measurable
4. Design and implement a plan to review and revise the mission statement on a regular basis that includes review of data regarding the achievement of the academic expectations by every student

2 CURRICULUM

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

1. Each curriculum area shall identify those school-wide academic expectations for which it is responsible.
2. The curriculum shall be aligned with the school-wide academic expectations and shall ensure that all students have sufficient opportunity to practice and achieve each of those expectations.
3. The written curriculum shall:
 - prescribe content;
 - integrate relevant school-wide learning expectations;
 - identify course-specific learning goals;
 - suggest instructional strategies;
 - suggest assessment techniques including the use of school-wide rubrics.
4. The curriculum shall engage all students in inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking as well as provide opportunities for the authentic application of knowledge and skills.

5. The curriculum shall:
 - be appropriately integrated;
 - emphasize depth of understanding over breadth of coverage.
6. The school shall provide opportunities for all students to extend learning beyond the normal course offerings and the school campus.
7. There shall be effective curricular coordination and articulation between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district.
8. Instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, staffing levels, and the resources of the library/media center shall be sufficient to allow for the implementation of the curriculum.
9. The professional staff shall be actively involved in the ongoing development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum based on assessments of student performance in achieving the school's academic expectations and course-specific learning goals.
10. The school shall commit sufficient time, financial resources, and personnel to the development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum.
11. Professional development activities shall support the development and implementation of the curriculum.

Conclusions:

Each curriculum area at Lexington High School has identified specific, school-wide academic expectations for which it is responsible. The school has also generated clear analytical rubrics that indicate the level of performance for most of the academic expectations. Each department has considered the academic expectations and has determined whether it assumes primary, reinforcing, or supporting responsibility for that expectation. In addition, the faculty has determined that there are certain expectations for which the entire school community shares responsibility. Identifying responsibility for academic expectations in each content area supports increased accountability and affords students the opportunity to meet academic expectations in each subject area. (self-study, program of studies, administrators)

Recently written curriculum documents for each content area identify specific school-wide academic expectations for which that department is responsible. However, connections between specific course content and the expectations stated in the school's mission are not always clear. Although teachers state that students have sufficient opportunities to practice and achieve the academic expectations, in practice teachers' choices of instructional strategies and assessment methods do not always reflect this. While the curriculum guides suggest some instructional strategies, the link between those strategies and the academic expectations is not made explicit, nor is there evidence of widespread use of the suggested instructional strategies school-wide. The newly developed academic expectations lack the formal support systems, like professional learning community discussions of student work or effective teacher supervision and evaluation processes that are needed to ensure that all students have equitable opportunities to achieve these expectations. While the strong school culture of Lexington High School supports both teachers offering and students accessing informal extra help sessions, it is not clear whether the students who need help take full advantage of this opportunity. Until the curriculum guides explicitly state how students will practice and achieve each of the academic expectations and the taught curriculum reflects this, the school has limited assurance that all students will be successful in achieving those expectations. (self-study, teachers, students, curriculum guides)

All academic disciplines have written curriculum guides that use a standard format for identifying course content, suggested instructional strategies, and assessment methods. These newly developed curriculum guides vary in quality and completeness, however. For example, many guides include a list of essential questions, but the quality of the essential questions and connections with the academic expectations are often unclear. The specificity of learning goals also varies significantly by course and content area. Although academic expectations are generally identified in the curriculum guides, they do not always clearly connect to course content or instructional strategies. Additionally, while the curriculum guides list a variety of suggested instructional activities/ strategies, most of the strategies

are teacher-centered rather than student-centered. Although the self-study cites grouping by levels (level 2, level 1, honors, advanced placement) as an effective strategy to differentiate instruction, curriculum guides do not identify how content will be scaffolded or differentiated in specific course areas. The lack of coherence, clarity, and specificity of written curriculum documents limits their ability to drive improved student learning. (self-study, teachers, students, curriculum guides)

Assessment techniques to measure student performance are also identified for each course in the curriculum guides, but these suggested assessment strategies in many of the content areas are often limited to traditional assessment practices, which may not afford all students the fullest opportunity to demonstrate what they know or are able to do. In addition, the school-wide rubrics that measure student progress on academic expectations are not directly linked to either instructional activities/strategies or assessment in the curriculum documents. Thus, lacking specific correlation in the curriculum guides, teachers are not encouraged to use school-wide rubrics to assess student progress on academic expectations. While members of the learning community agree that the mission and expectations reflect their beliefs, they have not yet used them to guide the actual development and review or delivery of curriculum. Consequently, the curriculum does not always provide opportunities for students to meet the academic expectations or establish a means for objectively assessing student progress on meeting academic expectations. (self-study, curriculum guides, observations)

The Lexington High School curriculum emphasizes academic rigor and critical/higher order thinking commensurate with grade and academic skill level expectations and across all disciplines in most courses. Advanced placement, honors, and most level one courses provide Lexington High School students with highly rigorous and challenging learning experiences that require them to comprehend, apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate content knowledge. However, some level two courses do not specifically provide similar opportunities for inquiry, problem-solving, or critical thinking. As a result, not all students at LHS are offered equitable learning opportunities or a curriculum that aligns with the school's mission to "maintain high expectations." (self-study, curriculum guides, students, observations)

While the curriculum at LHS focuses mainly on traditional high school content, there are some examples in the curriculum of unique projects that require students to apply their knowledge and skills in authentic contexts. For example, the tenth grade Honors World History II students present the findings of their research to a panel of community volunteers. LHS students also have opportunities to complete science fair or engineering projects as part of their curriculum. Additionally, the fine and performing arts departments frequently display student work ranging from hallway art displays to theatrical and musical performances. Such authentic displays of learning provide students with opportunities to extend their learning beyond the classroom and to demonstrate skills that they might not be able to

display through more traditional forms of assessment. (self-study, observations, program of studies)

While the LHS curriculum emphasizes both depth of understanding and strong content knowledge, it is not well integrated. The physical layout of the school generally isolates departments within specific buildings spread out over a wide area of campus. This, combined with the pressure felt by specific departments to focus heavily on single content areas in order to prepare their students for high-stakes content tests, limits interdisciplinary planning. The program of studies for 2008-2009 has also eliminated several of the school's existing interdisciplinary courses because of personnel changes. In general, curriculum guides do not provide frequent opportunities for application of interdisciplinary instruction and, by extension, improved student learning. The program of studies identifies courses in English, history, fine arts, mathematics, and science that are interdisciplinary by design, but the current curriculum documents for these courses provide only a general outline of content and skills, and it is not clear to what extent teachers are able to support interdisciplinary instruction. Limited opportunity for integrated curriculum and incomplete documentation reduce the school's opportunity to support improved student learning and collaboration. (curriculum guides, department heads, observations)

There is a wide variety of opportunities to extend learning beyond normal course offerings and the school campus at Lexington High School. Curriculum and interest-based clubs, school governance and leadership groups, and performance activities allow students to explore both academic and non-academic interests. Students are also required to complete forty hours of community service prior to graduation, encouraging active participation in the life of the school beyond academic hours and introducing young people to community needs and practices. While out-of-school academic options are limited, students have the opportunity to attend an exploration program at Minuteman Tech during their junior and senior years. Students who complete the Lexington High School math requirements also have the opportunity to take advanced math courses at Harvard University Extension School. Thus, students have a number of opportunities to extend learning outside the classroom, mainly through participation in a rich and varied co-curricular program. (teachers, students, self-study)

There is a lack of effective curricular coordination and articulation between academic areas within Lexington High School and between and among the sending schools in the district. Although there is a grade six to twelve curriculum review process and some curriculum documents have been better articulated than others, recent staff reductions, budget constraints, and time restrictions have not allowed for full implementation of planned reviews. Recently, the district designed a seven-year curriculum review cycle that will address one or two curriculum areas per year. As part of this effort, the district recently established K-12 district curriculum committees in math, wellness, and science. The elimination of curriculum

coordinators and middle school department heads has reduced the amount of time that can be dedicated to teacher collaboration, curriculum review, and coordination between and among schools. Middle school and high school curriculum leaders meet briefly every six weeks, but the focus of these meetings has been primarily on the transition of students from grade eight to grade nine, rather than on coordination of curriculum from grades six through twelve. Within Lexington High School, very little time is allocated during regularly scheduled department meetings for collaboration. (2008-2009 School Improvement Plan, self-study, department heads, sending school principals)

The Lexington High School Curriculum Cabinet, which meets weekly, is responsible for coordinating and aligning curriculum at the high school level. While some teachers of grade nine students meet regularly to coordinate curriculum, not all disciplines have time built into the schedule for teachers to meet and collaborate on curriculum. Initial plans are in place to establish Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) for the 2008-2009 school year. Department heads report that the focus of the PLCs will be coordination of curriculum, instruction, and assessment within departments. With an appropriate structure in place for curricular coordination between departments and across the district, LHS has the potential to ensure wider curricular coordination across the school to benefit students. (2008-2009 School Improvement Plan, self-study, department heads, sending school principals)

Instructional materials, equipment, supplies, facilities, staffing levels, and the resources of the library/media center are generally adequate to allow for the implementation of the curriculum at Lexington High School. Teachers and department heads report that textbooks and resource materials are available and funding is adequate, with the exception of provision of up-to-date technology to support teaching and learning in the classroom, where resources and funding are inadequate. Library resources are sufficient to support the school's curriculum. Although librarians and teachers work together, especially in the ninth grade, many teachers find it difficult to make time for collaboration, and few teachers express the belief that this collaboration is necessary. LHS has sufficient resources, with the exception of technology, to implement curriculum and meet the learning needs of students. (teachers, department heads, facility tour)

Given the recent development of the school's academic expectations, the staff has not yet evaluated or revised curriculum based on assessments of student performance aligned with those expectations. While there has been a significant amount of effort on the part of the faculty members to create curriculum guides in preparation of the NEASC visit, the link between academic expectations and curriculum content, instructional practices, and assessments is not yet explicit. It is part of the informal culture of the school for teachers to revise the curriculum from year to year, but this is not a systemic practice across the school. Until the LHS faculty members can become comfortable with the use of the academic expectations

to measure student performance, they cannot make informed decisions about revising curriculum to improve that performance. (self-study, curriculum guides, department heads)

The school has recently committed a significant amount of time, professional development expenditures, and personnel to the development of course overviews in preparation for the NEASC visit, but these are not in-depth documents that support teaching and learning. The department heads have devoted significant time during the past two years to working with teachers to develop the current curriculum overviews, and they express optimism that the proposed PLC structure will give them increased opportunities to work with their colleagues to extend and refine the curriculum documents. Some department heads say it will be necessary to create detailed unit plans, which include alignment to state standards and clear content objectives as well as suggested instructional strategies and common assessments. However, the Lexington High School culture strongly supports teacher autonomy, and this has worked against the development of curriculum documents that can be implemented consistently from classroom to classroom. Without fully developed curriculum documents that are consistently used, students' access to equitable learning opportunities cannot be guaranteed. (curriculum guides, self-study, department heads, teachers, administrators)

While significant professional development time has been devoted to curriculum review in preparation for the NEASC visit, Lexington High School teachers have not been provided with appropriate training in curriculum development and implementation. LHS have teachers used the template for the current curriculum overviews with little direction, support, or training. This is evident in the lack of clarity and in completeness of some of the curriculum documents and the development of essential questions that are ineffective or missing. In addition, many of the school's curriculum documents do not align with the Massachusetts state curriculum framework standards, nor are school-wide academic expectations integrated into the written curriculum. The planned curriculum review process and implementation of the professional learning community model will be ineffective without professional development in curriculum development and revision. (teachers, curriculum standards committee, self-study)

Commendations:

1. The work of department heads and teachers to identify the academic expectations for which each department is responsible
2. The significant effort of the faculty to create course overviews in preparation for the NEASC visit
3. The level of rigor in AP, honors, and many level 1 courses at LHS
4. The wide array of co-curricular and enrichment opportunities provided to students

5. The initiation of K-12 district articulation committees in math, wellness, and science

Recommendations:

1. Identify specific opportunities in each course where students will be able to practice and achieve the school's academic expectations
2. Continue to develop written documents for the units of study that prescribe content, suggest instructional strategies, and identify assessment techniques, including the use of school wide rubrics
3. Review and revise curriculum documents to ensure that all courses, especially level 2, emphasize inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills
4. Create additional interdisciplinary courses
5. Implement the K-12 curriculum review and articulation in all disciplines
6. Create additional opportunities for high school and middle school teachers to collaborate in support of curricular coordination
7. Ensure that sufficient instructional technology is available to support the implementation of the curriculum
8. Implement a process by which teachers use assessment of student performance to revise curriculum
9. Provide training for teachers in best practices related to curriculum design and implementation
10. Establish a school climate of curriculum use that will result in effectively developed and implemented curriculum documents

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

3 INSTRUCTION

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

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

Conclusions:

Instructional strategies in use at Lexington High School are not yet consistent with the school's newly developed mission statement. Teachers express a sense of urgency about covering a great deal of content in order to prepare their students for standardized tests; this pressure results in a predominance of teacher-centered instructional strategies and a lack of differentiation of instruction. The Lexington High School Mission's emphasis on creating a "respectful, safe, supportive environment...inspired by curiosity" and the "need to reduce unhealthy stress" can be found in other aspects of the school culture and the wide variety of co-curricular activities, but the transference of these elements of the mission is not yet apparent in some classroom instructional practices. In addition, though the diversity of the learning community is acknowledged through offering a variety of classes both in level and content, most teachers' individual instructional practices do not provide for the diverse needs of their students within a given class. Until there is a more comprehensive integration of this facet of the mission statement in classroom instructional strategies, the aims of Lexington High School's mission statement can not be achieved. (self-study, students, teachers, shadowing)

While instructional strategies used by Lexington High School teachers do not consistently reflect the school's mission statement, they support the school's academic expectations for student learning. For example, the expectations that students can "write clearly and effectively...read and comprehend varied materials," and "speak clearly and effectively" are consistently evident in classroom instruction. Although the school-wide rubrics for academic expectations have not been consistently adopted for general classroom use, the expectations are being addressed in many individual classrooms through rigorous student work assignments. Applying the school's own academic expectations to the classroom and using the school-wide rubrics will provide students an opportunity to master a common set of expectations, and may lead to varied, improved instructional practices and more equitable learning opportunities for all students. (teachers, self-study, observations, students)

The Lexington High School teachers employ instructional practices that personalize learning mainly through the use of out-of-class extra help sessions. The willingness of teachers to meet with students before and after school and during the school's defined X and Z blocks and during study and free periods demonstrates the faculty's commitment to supporting all students outside of regular class time. Students and faculty members both recognize and value this additional instructional time. However, within classrooms, the use of differentiated instruction to accommodate multiple learning styles, although recognized as necessary by teachers, is not widely practiced. Over-reliance on out-of-class extra help sessions limits students' options to learn in ways that meet their needs and requires students to admit they need help, seek it out, and make time for it. Without a more varied in-class instructional repertoire, that includes differentiation, teachers are not able to ensure that students' learning needs are met in a timely, equitable, and effective fashion. (observations, teachers, students)

With few exceptions, instruction at LHS is not formally integrated across disciplines.

The ninth grade social studies and English program does provide time and structure for teachers to plan and collaborate. Other individual teachers would like to make similar interdisciplinary connections, but often lack of time and separation of departmental location hinders this effort. An example of this challenge to cross-discipline integration is a recent geometry class that traveled to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts to examine geometry in art. Although this is an innovative and integrated lesson design, no connection or collaboration was sought between the math and art programs, resulting in a lost opportunity to support improved student learning by making connections between the disciplines. The lack of formal support for cross-discipline integration limits opportunities for improved student learning. (teachers, observations, student work)

Some LHS teachers favor a traditional lecture method of instruction that does not always provide rich opportunities for students to pursue active, engaged learning. While many teachers have a high level of skill in using this instructional technique, in a number of classrooms there are many students who respond to this strategy by becoming passive learners not fully engaged in the lesson. The school's mission statement proposes that students should be "engaged" and use "effort and imagination" to develop academic habits of mind. As a result of this lack of opportunity for active learning, there are students at all levels who might otherwise be engaged but are not assisted to meet their potential. (observations, teachers, students)

While active learning is limited in some classrooms, in general, Lexington High School students are given a wide variety of options for self-directed learning. The culture of LHS purposefully assigns students responsibility for their own behavior and learning. During unscheduled periods, juniors and seniors are free to move about campus and into the local community. The open campus atmosphere is reflected in many of the classroom environments, where relationships between students and teachers are generally informal. As a result, rules like being on time to class and on task during class are flexible and relaxed. Many teachers give students choices when assigning projects so that students have opportunities to find their voices and use their skills if they are self-directed and motivated learners. While the school's faculty and administrators value student independence, they recognize that too many choices in a highly competitive and academically rigorous school may be overwhelming for some students. Striking a balance between promoting independence and providing appropriate structure and support will ensure that all students' needs are met at Lexington High School. (student work, shadowing, observations, teachers, students)

The rigorous content of many of the courses at LHS frequently involves students in higher order thinking although some of the instructional strategies and formal and informal assessments limit student learning to comprehension and application levels. While curriculum documents are beginning to include some essential questions, teachers rarely use these in most classrooms or on most assignments. Connecting daily classroom activities, homework, long-term projects, and assessments to essential questions and understandings and school-wide academic expectations is necessary for

teachers to facilitate student connections between classroom content and higher order thinking skills. (observations, students, student work, teachers)

In many classes, LHS students are given the opportunity to apply knowledge or skills learned in the classroom. Some examples cited in the self-study are the science fair, debate tournaments, and honors research projects. Other examples of real-life applications of student work and opportunities to apply skills can be found in classroom presentations and the school's various writing publications: school newspaper, literary magazines, and yearbook. While self-directed and motivated students have ample opportunities to apply knowledge and skills, more consistent inclusion of these options throughout all levels of instruction is needed to support improved student learning. (teachers, school handbook, self-study, shadowing of students)

Students are afforded opportunities to self-assess and reflect on their own learning at LHS. Some assessments of student learning include student self-evaluation. Some teachers use self-reflection journals, and goal setting is sometimes used to identify targets in writing and lab inquiry conclusions. Through analyzing where they experienced the most difficulty to identifying where they met the greatest success, LHS students may use content-specific rubrics and open response questions as key tools for meta-cognition. In addition, peer review is sometimes used as an additional source of feedback. For example, in a social studies group oral presentation, classmates used a teacher-designed rubric to evaluate reports made by peers and provided commendations and recommendations. These opportunities for self-assessment and reflection allow students to demonstrate improvement and enhance understanding. (teachers, students, observations, self-study)

Some Lexington High School teachers use feedback from a variety of sources as a means of improving instruction. Though many teachers use informal student feedback methods to assess classroom instructional practices such as end-of-quarter course assessments and student surveys, the faculty of Lexington High School has not formally adopted protocols for teachers to examine and discuss assignments, student work, or assessments, either by department or as an opportunity to share ideas across disciplines. However, informal teacher collaboration is a part of the culture of the school. For example, some teachers use The First Class software system as a way to share resources and enhance communication. Although currently used on a limited basis for student/teacher communication and peer collaboration, this technology has much potential in the future as the Professional Learning Community model is developed and implemented. Outside of the contractual obligation observations for teachers without professional status, little administrative feedback is provided for instructional improvement. Thus, feedback from parents and supervisors is only sometimes used to improve instruction. As a result, Lexington High School teachers have the opportunity for input from students but do not benefit from extensive formal feedback about instruction from their colleagues or parents. (teachers, school leaders, self-study)

At Lexington High School, most teachers are experts in their content areas and stay current in their subject knowledge but do not regularly make instructional pedagogy their major improvement focus. Within disciplines, teachers share professional resources related to content, but few of these appear to be used to drive improvement of teaching and learning. Although the self-study indicates that exchanges about instructional strategies are a significant part of the informal discussions at LHS, there is no in-depth study of these on a regular basis. Doug Reeves and Rick and Becky DuFour, national experts on teaching and learning, spoke to the entire staff during professional development sessions during the last two years, but little direct application of their theories to day-to-day instructional improvement can be cited as a result. The school's work to begin to develop professional learning communities (PLC) has not yet translated into improved classroom strategies for increased student learning. In a few cases such as the ninth grade English and social studies teachers, collaborative planning and peer feedback takes place, largely because decreased teaching time and required common planning provide the appropriate structure. Self-study survey results verify that informal discussions about instructional strategies take place, but 66.6% of the respondents reported that they cannot collaborate with one another as much as they wish. Faculty meetings and department meetings are generally used for management issues and do not provide collaborative opportunities for teachers to talk about teaching. The plans for implementation of PLCs in 2008-2009 should provide a more formal structure for teachers to address the necessary professional skills to meet diverse student learning needs, should that practice be endorsed and supported by administrators. Without time for collaboration, professional development in best practices, and opportunities for peer observations, teachers cannot remain current in best practices or improve their instructional strategies. (teachers, self-study, survey)

Technology is sometimes integrated into the support of teaching and learning at LHS. SMARTboards, graphing calculators, various projectors, computer labs, and notebook computers are among the technologies available on a very limited basis. Each classroom has at least one computer station for student and teacher use. Although embedded in everyday clerical and communicative processes, technology is infrequently used in the classroom as an instructional tool to enhance student learning. Though many teachers express interest in using various technologies, many refer to factors hindering its use in the classroom, such as the lack of an instructional technology specialist and the resulting lack of technology support, no technology professional development, and inadequate component maintenance. As a result, students and teachers do not fully benefit from these powerful instructional tools, in spite of a specific technology reference embedded in the expectations for student learning. (self-study, classroom observations, teachers)

Lexington High School's professional development program is not generally guided by identified instructional needs and does not provide formal, coordinated opportunities for teachers to develop and improve their instructional strategies. The lack of recent professional development related to instruction has limited effective teacher

collaboration and the improvement of instructional practices. No formal time has been allocated for the necessary conversations, skill development, peer observations, and practice and reflection needed to improve instruction. Differentiated instruction to meet the varied needs of learners within a given level of a course is not a school-wide topic of discussion. Most teachers have not had recent training in best instructional practices to support student learning. Plans have been proposed to support the development of Professional Learning Communities in the 2008-2009 school year, with time built into the schedule for teacher teams to engage in collaborative inquiry regarding ways to support student learning through improved instructional practices. In particular, the LHS community has an identified need to focus on instructional strategies to respond to students who are disengaged from their learning. Continued training and teacher collaboration related to improvements in instructional practices will help LHS teachers to meet the needs of all learners. (teachers, school leaders, observations)

Commendations:

1. Teachers' willingness to help and support students
2. The freshman English-social studies team as a model of interdisciplinary instruction
3. The expert background and preparation of teachers in most content areas
4. The steps taken toward creating a plan for formal collaboration to improve instruction through implementation of the Professional Learning Community model
5. The use of the First Class software system as an informal communication and collaboration link

Recommendations:

1. Review and implement instructional practices to more closely align with the school's mission statement
2. Provide professional development in best practices related to differentiated and varied instruction and implement follow-up coaching and encouragement to implement such strategies
3. Increase discussion of and implementation of essential questions and understandings in order to promote higher order thinking in active practice at all levels
4. Create a formal tool to gather parent and peer feedback and use results to

improve instruction

5. Establish formal procedures so that examination of student work and instructional strategies and practices become a significant part of the professional culture of the school
6. Embed regular discussion of best practices of teaching and learning into staff and department meetings
7. Increase the use of technology for instructional purposes and provide support and professional development in its use
8. Design common assessments and use the resulting data to improve instruction

4

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

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

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

Conclusions:

There is not yet a formal process in place at Lexington High School to assess school-wide and individual student progress in achieving the academic expectations in the mission based on school-wide rubrics. However, Lexington High School has created well-defined school-wide rubrics to measure nine of ten academic expectations for student learning and published them in the program of studies. The school has not yet developed a rubric to measure the expectation that students will “demonstrate practical applications of knowledge.” Additionally, each content area has defined the primary and secondary responsibilities for assessing students’ progress in achieving nine of ten academic expectations. While the school has recognized the need to implement the rubrics to assess student achievement more systematically, teachers are currently unable to effectively assess students’ progress towards mastery over time because the rubrics system has not yet been fully implemented by individual teachers at the course level and there is not yet a school-wide reporting mechanism in place. As a result, students are currently using a variety of assessment tools to measure personal progress, but have not yet begun to use the rubrics to relate personal progress to the school’s academic expectations. (panel presentation, teachers, self-study, school committee, central office administrators)

Lexington High School’s faculty members have developed a process to use data to assess the success of the school in achieving its civic and social expectations. The school has identified and targeted a number of performance indicators for five civic and social expectations for students and has identified pertinent data sources for a broad range of social and emotional areas of growth. Data to evaluate students’ progress in achieving these expectations include the following: attendance records, records of the number of honor code violations, parking violations, in and out of school suspensions, discipline incidents at school functions, textbook obligations, improper uses of electronic devices, and theft reports and the results of investigations. Other positive indicators of success in meeting the expectations include increased involvement in recycling, the student/faculty senate results, community service hours, and extracurricular activity participation. The school has also collected data through the Youth Risk survey and regularly reports the results of this survey separately to the school community. Continuing to collect and analyze data related to civic and social expectations over time will allow the school to make decisions to meet student needs and will allow the school to assess its achievement and to report to the community. (self-study, central office administrators, teachers, panel presentation)

Although LHS administrators have set the expectation that teachers will clarify for students the relevant school-wide academic expectations and course-specific learning goals, implementation of this requirement varies widely. Specific references to school-wide and course-specific learning goals also varies by department. For example, the fine arts department involves students in the creation of media sources and has integrated the school’s academic expectations with the art curriculum through a photography project that displays elements of the school mission statement. Also,

members of the English department frequently use course-specific rubrics that are based on school-wide rubrics to assess the writing expectation. In the history department, teachers have aligned the goals of the freshman research paper with the school-wide writing expectation. The English and history departments' curriculum maps also demonstrate alignment of school-wide and course-specific goals. Despite the clarity of expectations in these classrooms and departments, such practices are not widespread through the remaining content areas. Only a minority of teachers reports that they often inform or always inform students of course-specific learning goals. Teachers rarely use models of exemplary student work to illustrate expectations for individual assignments. Therefore, students are not always aware of how classroom assignments and assessments relate to the academic expectations in the mission statement they are responsible for achieving. Greater equity of opportunity at all levels for all students would be achieved by providing them all with consistent information about what is expected of them. (self-study, student shadowing, teachers, department heads)

Lexington High School teachers infrequently base classroom assessment of student learning on school-wide and course-specific rubrics. A few teachers in the school provide course-specific and department-wide rubrics to students when a major assignment is given. In specific instances such as the English /history grade nine team, availability of common planning time has resulted in the integration of school-wide rubrics into some course assessments. Although each department has identified responsibility for measuring student achievement, examination of student work and teacher interviews show that some faculty members do not understand how to implement school-wide rubrics in their specific courses. Because the school-wide rubrics were developed only a year ago, the school leadership is aware of the lack of congruence between measuring student progress on school-wide rubrics and current assessment practices and had developed a plan to address this concern. This year, each department has identified primary responsibility for specific school-wide rubrics. Next year, teachers will be provided common planning times to create common assessments with course-specific rubrics based upon the school-wide rubrics. This plan, while representing a step forward in the classroom use of rubrics, does not guarantee that each student will be assessed by the standards that were carefully articulated in the school-wide rubrics. The rubrics provide clear expectations of desired levels of student demonstration of knowledge and skill. Both students and teachers must understand the meaning of and use of rubrics. Such an understanding allows students to know what they must do to improve their work. The use of rubrics makes assessment an important formative tool and also allows students to assess their own work more effectively, empowering them as independent learners. (self-study, student shadowing, teachers, students)

Some teachers at Lexington High School use varied assessment strategies to determine student knowledge, skills, and competencies and to assess student growth over time, but these alternative assessment practices are inconsistent. Although many teachers use at least one major alternative assessment in their courses such as book publishing

projects, Socratic seminars, and historical flipbooks. However, students report that essays and tests are the most prevalent assessment strategy in most of their courses, student work shows that many assessments, even at the higher levels, are traditional and emphasize lower-order thinking skills such as comprehension and recall. Limited use of variety in assessments prevents teachers from adequately identifying students' strengths and weaknesses and adjusting instruction accordingly, or from assessing the learning of students who have different learning styles. As a consequence, many students are not given an equitable opportunity to demonstrate what they know and what they have learned, and creative engaging, real-world examples of the uses of information and education are not part of students' learning experiences. It may be necessary to provide extensive professional development for traditional teachers in the creation and interpretation of alternative assessments that stimulate higher-level thinking processes and problem-solving, and some will require training in how to interpret such assessments. (self-study, student work, students, teachers)

LHS teachers meet collaboratively, but only on an informal and inconsistent basis, to share and discuss student work and the results of student assessments for the purposes of revising the curriculum and improving instructional strategies. While department or curriculum groups have sometimes met for these purposes, most of these meetings focus on course-specific rubrics as opposed to consistent use of school-wide rubrics. There is no school-wide formal protocol for discussing and sharing student work. For example, the grade nine English and history teams have scheduled common planning time to design curriculum and to discuss assessment practices around significant major assignments such as the freshman research project, but they do not collaboratively score the work. In other disciplines such as science and fine arts, individual teachers have taken the initiative to meet informally to revise curriculum and develop and implement course-specific rubrics. Teachers have expressed frustration with absence of scheduled time to support collaboration with colleagues between and among departments. However, school leaders have developed a plan for 2008-09 that should provide for more scheduled teacher collaboration. Currently, teachers' inability to engage in formal, collaborative discussions about student work hinders purposeful revisions in curriculum and instruction to improve student learning. (panel presentation, teachers, central office administrators, department heads)

Although LHS has studied state assessment data to improve student learning, the school has not yet made any significant revisions to the curriculum or instruction in response to these data. For example, in response to the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) results, Lexington Public Schools personnel wrote and published a report "The Achievement Gap" which will be used to develop plans to improve student achievement in targeted low-performance cohorts. As an intervention measure, LHS has for the past several years recently provided MCAS remediation tutoring in math and English. The 2008-09 School Improvement Plan provides for the establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) at the high school to develop strategies to improve student performance. The planned revisions of instructional strategies and curriculum in response to state assessment data must be

implemented as soon as possible to support teachers' efforts to address the diverse learning needs of LHS students. It may be necessary to provide professional development in differentiation of instruction and assessment and in strategies to teach higher-level thought processes and problem-solving at all levels of the school to improve all students' opportunities to master expectations and improve external testing results for student sub-groups. (panel presentation, self-study, school committee, central office administrators, teachers)

The school's professional development program does not provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate in developing a broad range of student assessment strategies. Lexington High School faculty members report a need for professional development on alternative assessment strategies. The 2007-08 professional development focused on completion of curriculum mapping in preparation for the NEASC visit. Next year, some professional development may be dedicated to the creation and implementation of course-specific rubrics based on school-wide rubrics associated with academic expectations. The school also plans to train approximately twenty teachers this summer in implementing Professional Learning Communities. This training will continue during 2008-09 to foster collaborative inquiry on how to improve student learning and teaching and refine assessment strategies. Lexington High School department heads will be responsible for facilitating the process and monitoring progress. While this plan holds promise, the lack of professional development on developing and using a variety of effective assessment and instruction strategies currently limits teachers' ability to address all LHS students' learning needs. (self-study, panel presentation, teachers, central office administrators)

The school's faculty does not yet communicate individual student progress in achieving school-wide academic expectations to students and their families or the school's progress in achieving all school-wide expectations to the school community. Currently, there is no process to measure and report individual student progress towards achieving the academic expectations on a school-wide basis. However, the school does collect and communicate data related to civic and social expectations and tracks the progress of its students in this area. Lexington uses the results of the Youth Risk Survey to revise health education curriculum and the school reports its progress toward reaching other identified targets for improved student performances through publishing advanced placement exam and MCAS results, and SAT I and SAT II scores, and regular report cards and progress reports. The school sends progress reports when students' grades require it. Other methods of reporting individual student progress include parent-teacher conferences, e-mail and telephone conversations. Course expectations are sometimes distributed to students and parents at the start of each semester. There is no clear articulation of what the rubrics' performance levels of "exemplary, proficient, developing, and beginning" progress look like for student learning. As a result, students and their parents cannot interpret information on how students are performing in relation to the school's stated academic expectations. (self-study, central office administrators, teachers, department heads)

Commendations:

1. The initial collection of data based on performance indicators for measuring the achievement of civic and social expectations
2. The development and use of performance-based assessments in some disciplines
3. The informal collaboration at LHS which has resulted in some shared assessments

Recommendations:

1. Develop a process to assess school-wide and individual student progress in achieving the academic expectations in the mission based on school-wide rubrics and communicate the results to individual students and to the community
2. Create and implement a consistent process for recording, measuring and reporting students' progress in achieving civic and social expectations
3. Provide professional development in varying assessment strategies and monitor their use
4. Create common assessments in all core courses
5. Clarify to students the link between each learning activity and course and school-wide academic expectations
6. Refine the academic expectations and ensure that teachers base classroom assessments on school-wide rubrics
7. Use the proposed Professional Learning Community initiative to require collaborative analysis of student work and assessments among teachers in order to revise curriculum and improve instruction

SUPPORT STANDARDS

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION
SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING
COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

SUPPORT STANDARD

5

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

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

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

Conclusions:

The LHS principal makes important decisions and develops policies for the school by using a highly collaborative leadership style. The principal is an active member and facilitator of several school groups that have helped develop policy and procedures that support school improvement. The principal has defined his role as a leader as maintaining a climate in which full and open discussion takes place in the established groups. In addition, the principal takes under advisement bills presented by the Faculty/Student Senate, and often communicates directly with the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA). His decisions to discontinue weighted grade point averages and to institute mandatory bus transportation to the prom for all students were direct results of these discussions. The principal has also guided his staff through difficult funding cuts, including the district's decision to increase the teaching load in some departments. The principal has provided effective decision-making to support gradual steps toward the implementation of the mission and expectations. The principal uses his autonomy and decision-making ability to support school improvement at Lexington High School. (self-study, teachers, school committee, students)

The Lexington High School principal has begun to create and maintain a vision focused on student learning by encouraging the implementation of school-wide rubrics to measure student achievement of academic expectations. He also meets weekly with his administrative team and department heads in the Curriculum Cabinet to discuss issues having an impact upon the school environment. The cabinet helps the principal make decisions and serves as a bridge between faculty and administrative personnel. The principal also communicates regularly with the LHS community through the LHS Newsletter and LHS First Class Conferencing. Although the principal's actions indicate that he has a clear vision, teachers express some uncertainty about the specific elements of this vision. Based on this feedback from faculty members, it is clear that the principal must work to continue to involve faculty in a process that clarifies a common vision, direction, and focus for student learning in order to support continued improvement in student achievement. (teachers, self-study, school leadership team, department heads, panel presentation)

The Lexington High School leadership structure includes a principal, an associate principal, department heads, guidance director, MST director/dean, and four deans each responsible for the overall supervision of a house. The deans chair meetings with support staff to monitor students' academic and social progress, supervise and evaluate faculty members, and act as student advocates, manage discipline, and communicate with parents. In addition to the leadership team, many faculty members at LHS are engaged in leadership activities outside of the classroom in a wide array of extracurricular activities advised by teachers. Department heads and teachers also serve as leaders by bringing their academic expertise to the committees on which they serve. LHS committee work includes the LHS Curriculum Cabinet, the LHS Principal's Advisory Committee (PAC), and rubric development committees. Faculty members

have contributed greatly to the development of the mission statement, expectations for student learning, and school-wide and course specific rubrics. Faculty members also volunteer to be a part of the Faculty/Student Senate. Active involvement by teachers in decision-making at Lexington High School is part of the school's culture. (self-study, teachers, leadership team, LHS Student/Parent Handbook)

Some aspects of the current school organization promote Lexington High School's Mission and Expectations for Student Learning, while others work against it. There is a general recognition that all students require support to navigate the school's rigorous, competitive academic school culture. For example, students are provided with a consistent administrative/guidance team that is assigned to them for their high school years. Students also meet with guidance counselors regularly on a one-on-one basis and in small group seminars. An LHS Multidisciplinary Support Team (MST) has been developed to meet the needs of students with diagnosed psychological disabilities. This in-house program has been developed to provide an additional level of support for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities. The Multidisciplinary Support Team (MST) facilitates the development of psychological stability and personal competence. This team includes clinically trained psychologists, psychological social workers, special education teachers, and tutors. Outside of these few programs, the general organization of academic departments makes meeting some elements of the mission very difficult. For example, faculty members have a difficult time collaborating with teachers from other departments because they are physically isolated in the school's different buildings organized by department. With the exception of the ninth grade English and social studies teachers, faculty members have no scheduled common planning time. Despite structural limitations, however, some teachers use their e-mail program (First Class) to post common worksheets, assessments, and projects and to improve collegial communication. However, the lack of formal collaboration opportunities limits the ability of the staff to cooperate in using data to improve student learning and meet the school's mission. (teachers, facility tour, shadowing of students, Achievement Gap report, self-study)

Student grouping patterns at LHS do not generally reflect the diversity of the student body, do not foster heterogeneity, do not always reflect current research and best practices, nor fully support the achievement of the school's mission and expectations for student learning. A small number of courses at LHS embraces heterogeneous grouping while most are strictly leveled (advanced placement, honors, level 1, and level 2). Freshman English and social studies classes as well as senior English classes are not leveled. Teachers report scheduling decisions that result in inclusion classes with many students with disabilities clustered within a few classes. A study conducted by the district to determine the effect of ethnicity on achievement has revealed a serious difference in the MCAS results of African American and Hispanic students at Lexington High School as compared to Caucasian and Asian students. The population of African American students, especially participants in the METCO program intended to offer academic opportunity as well as to add diversity to suburban schools, and Hispanic students is disproportionately clustered in lower level classes. As a consequence of the

leveled program and lack of diversity in some classes, current student grouping patterns may not meet the needs of some students at Lexington High School. (self-study, teachers, Achievement Gap report)

The LHS schedule is driven by the school's mission and expectations for student learning and generally supports the effective implementation of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The schedule of LHS rotates around an eight-block schedule. Each class meets four times a week, varying in time from forty-five to fifty-five minute blocks. Science classes meet for extra time, depending upon level, to facilitate laboratory activities. Teachers, who lost some lab time several years ago in tight budget times, now find it challenging to teach the curriculum of the science and technology state curriculum framework within the allotted time. Along with scheduled classes, there are also two homeroom periods during the week, as well as one forty-five minute X-block each week. This X-block is time available for the meeting of the Student/Faculty Senate, teacher/student meetings, and other extracurricular activities. Additionally, a thirty-minute Z-block at the end of the day allows opportunities for students to meet with teachers for help. No sports or school activities are scheduled during that time. The department heads report that they are working toward building a 2008-2009 schedule that will allow each department to have a common block as planning periods to achieve collaboration twice a week within the departments. Even though the faculty members value teacher autonomy, the current schedule does not provide structured time for teachers to share instructional ideas, analyze student work, or use assessment data to drive curriculum. While not all aspects of the schedule are ideal, it generally supports appropriate delivery of the instructional program. (teachers, department heads, self-study)

Meaningful roles in the decision-making process are accorded to students, parents, and all members of the school staff to promote an atmosphere of participation, responsibility, and ownership at LHS. Lexington High School's organizational structure is supported by formal as well as informal mechanisms for all school constituents to have a voice in school-wide decisions. As an illustration of this distributed school leadership, several committees with a wide representation of ideas, expertise, and experience meet regularly to discuss key school issues. The school council develops the school improvement plan, reviews the budget, and addresses issues that affect Lexington High School. The LHS Student/Faculty Senate initiates changes through the passage of bills, as outlined in its constitution. For example, the phase-out of weighted GPA to unweighted GPA came from data collection and analysis of a student stress survey. The full LHS faculty has engaged in creating a new mission and expectations to reduce unhealthy stress. The LHS Curriculum Cabinet reviews and discusses policies and curricula, including creating new course recommendations and supporting the development of the school-wide rubrics. The LHS Principal's Advisory Council (PAC) deals with general school-wide issues. Surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, and ad-hoc committees are regularly used to collect data and solicit feedback. All stakeholders in the school community have a voice in the decision-making process. This promotes an atmosphere of participation, responsibility, and ownership at

Lexington High School. (self-study, teachers, students, parents, school leadership team)

Although many LHS teachers report that they feel burdened by current teaching demands resulting from increased teacher loads from sixteen to twenty class periods per week, data collection from teacher schedules indicates that out of 32 periods, teachers teach a maximum of 20 sections, have one duty, and eleven planning periods each five-day week. Class size data indicates that the majority of classes is well below 25 students, and no teacher exceeds his/her contractual cap of 125 students. Teachers are also concerned about the increase in the number of students receiving specialized services (Individual Curriculum Accommodation Plans (ICAPs), 504s and Individual Education Plans (IEPs). There is a perception that there is an unreasonable expectation in Lexington to answer parent e-mail quickly. Despite these concerns, teachers have sufficient planning periods and total teacher loads are reasonable and should enable them to meet the learning needs of individual students. (teachers, school administrators, panel presentation, department heads)

There is no formal, on-going program at LHS through which each student has an adult member of the school's community, in addition to the school guidance counselor, who personalizes each student's educational experience, knows the student well, and assists the student in achieving the school-wide expectations for student learning.

Despite this lack of a formal program, many students report a strong connection to the school, their teachers and coaches and cite the accessibility of caring adults. There are many informal opportunities for students to connect with faculty members, including twice-weekly homerooms that remain the same for the duration of high school and participation in extra-curricular activities. While the school culture is highly supportive of individual students, there is no mechanism to ensure that all students are connected. Without a formal program, there is also no guarantee that each student has been given the personal attention that would help guarantee the successful achievement of the school-wide expectations for student learning and might also reduce "unhealthy stress". (teachers, student shadowing, students)

There is some formal collaboration at LHS. Opportunities for faculty collaboration exist in the ninth grade teaming of English and social studies classes and in the twelfth grade integrated math and physics course. Professional staff members meet formally as a department (bi-weekly) and informally with course-specific colleagues. Some departments use First Class conferencing to share web-based materials and discuss instructional strategies, and to post parent and student information. LHS support staff members meet regularly and collaboratively with teachers and administrators to support learning for all students. The planned PLC initiative and implementation will provide staff members with a formal process for collaboration built into the school day, and will encourage teachers to focus on essential questions, curriculum relevance, and assessment products. While LHS offers an academically rich and challenging program for students, there is a need for greater collaboration and interdisciplinary planning for teachers and within and across departments. (department heads, teachers, self-study)

Support staff and faculty members are involved in promoting the well-being and learning of each student. Students interact regularly with a variety of professional and support staff members. The school monitor circulates throughout the cafeteria and the quad where students gather. Deans keep their cohort of students throughout the students' entire high school experience and interact daily with students, checking on attendance, scheduling, academic progress, and discipline. House secretaries disseminate information to the entire school community. In addition to providing counseling, guidance counselors facilitate seminars that emphasize post-secondary planning. School nurses conduct seminars that discuss issues of health and wellness. Outreach workers help students cope with personal issues that impact school. Teachers interact with students both inside and outside the classroom environment in an effort to connect with students. These interactions include tutoring, chaperoning, coaching, and advising clubs. All faculty and staff members actively promote the well-being and learning of students at Lexington High School. (teachers, self-study, administrators, department heads, facility tour)

Student achievement is consistently acknowledged and displayed at LHS. Cabinets and display cases at the school contain student artwork, trophies, and displays. Faculty and student work is rotated on a semester basis. Drama productions are frequent and include performances that are student-directed and student-written. Several student publications provide a forum for student writing, including a school newspaper, yearbook, and literary magazine. A senior banquet and an awards ceremony recognize accomplishments and scholarships. Academic achievement is recognized in a variety of events, including History Day, and a science fair. The athletic department also recognizes student athlete achievements at the close of each sports season. The PSTA newsletter, e-mail and public address announcements by the principal, as well as local newspaper articles, communicate achievements to students, parents, and the Lexington community. Faculty members frequently attend sporting events, plays, and musical performances to support and acknowledge student achievement. Teachers often contact homes to share positive feedback with parents, especially if the student has struggled in the past. Student accomplishments are routinely shared via the First Class e-mail system, allowing all faculty members to congratulate students. Graded student work is not displayed in a deliberate effort to reduce comparisons and competition and to lower stress. The recognition of student accomplishments reflects the mission statement of LHS and its commitment to developing well-educated, healthy, engaged students. (self-study, parents, students, facility tour)

The climate of LHS is safe, positive, and supportive, resulting in a sense of pride and ownership among students. Students at LHS have no concerns about their physical safety, despite the wide-open facilities. Students enjoy the freedom of an open campus. However, many students feel a high level of stress resulting from the pressure upon them to achieve future enrollment in highly selective colleges. Faculty members feel many students take on too many activities and demanding classes. Counselors say that it is not uncommon for students to feel that their worth is connected to how well they perform in school and as demonstrated through college acceptances. Additionally, as

happens in many large high schools, some LHS students feel alienated by cultural or political differences. The school leadership team is very aware of this concern and has taken deliberate steps to reduce the level of pressure that causes that stress. Despite the stresses inherent in this large, academically-oriented school, there is a sense of ownership among students that reflects pride in the school. The overall school climate of LHS supports student achievement. (teachers, parents, student shadowing, self-study)

The Lexington School Committee supports the implementation of the school's mission and expectations for student learning. The school committee approved the mission and expectations for student learning, and they continue to use these documents to guide their decisions. The school committee tracks MCAS results, approves school improvement plans and encourages cost-savings opportunities that still maintain high quality services. The school committee's support of the school's mission and expectations drives positive school improvement. (school committee members, department heads, self-study)

Commendations:

1. The principal's support for the development of a shared vision focused on student learning
2. The continuity of student support provided by the four year administrative/guidance team and deans
3. The school schedule that allows frequent opportunities for student-teacher interactions and extracurricular activities
4. The formal and informal mechanisms that encourage most school constituents to have a voice in decision-making
5. The school's recognition of the impact of unhealthy stress and subsequent actions taken to address these issues
6. The district's courage and effort to acknowledge the achievement gap

Recommendations:

1. Increase department collaboration and the development of interdisciplinary curriculum
2. Review and revise student grouping practices to increase heterogeneity in light of current research and student achievement data
3. Reduce the achievement gap
4. Develop and implement a formal program to identify an adult member of the school community who connects with each student and personalizes his/her educational experience

SUPPORT STANDARD

6 SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

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

All Student Support Services

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

16. There shall be sufficient certified/licensed personnel and support staff to provide effective counseling, health, special education, and library media services.

Guidance Services

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

Health Services

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

SUPPORT STANDARD

6 SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Library Information Services

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

Special Education Services

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

Conclusions:

Lexington High School's student support services are generally consistent with the school's mission, but this varies within defined support areas. The guidance program at Lexington High School has been loosely aligned with the frameworks set forth by the Massachusetts School Counselor Association, but the department lacks a formal comprehensive curriculum that aligns itself with the mission statement and drives the services of the school. The guidance seminar program focuses mainly on the needs of students to successfully complete their high school courses and be accepted into a college of their choice. Despite the lack of formal alignment, guidance counselors have demonstrated efforts to begin to support the mission. For example, they help students learn to make appropriate and healthy choices in regard to their course selections and make efforts to reduce student stress as well as being available for students on a drop-in basis. However, there is no program or curriculum in place to address the needs of students who are not planning to attend college although a partnership with Minuteman Vocational Technology High School has been ongoing for six years, with between seven and fifteen students taking part each year. The health department, in attending to the health and wellness of all students and providing preventive and intervention services for all students, supports the school's mission. (self-study, panel presentation, parents, students, teachers, facility tour, classroom observations, department heads, student shadowing)

The special education department offers a wide range of support services consistent with the school's mission and expectations for student learning. Instructional programs have been designed to address students' diagnosed disabilities. These programs consist of a language-based learning disability program, an intensive learning program, and the multidisciplinary support team. The special education staff members strive to assist students in working towards making effective progress, to help them develop self-advocacy skills, and to assist them to become responsible partners in their education. Students on individual education plans have the opportunity to take a variety of different leveled classes according to their individual needs. All these efforts support the school's mission. (self-study, panel presentation, parents, students, teachers, facility tour, classroom observations, department heads, student shadowing)

The library information services are also consistent with the school's mission to support student learning and develop well-educated and engaged students. With over two thousand students and an open campus in which students are able to use library services whenever they are free during the day, the library staff has created routines to ensure that students remain on task to study, read, and conduct research. Librarians have created a number of informational handouts, fliers, and pamphlets for students in the use of databases, educational software, and information technology applications. Print materials are placed on carts for student use in support of class projects assigned by specific teachers. Librarians attend department meetings about once a year to stay

informed about curriculum and projects. A student multi-media room is available for students to use when creating video and audio projects for class, and a large collection of textbooks is available at the circulation desk for students to use while in the library, rather than having to carry heavy books all day. Most impressively, an extensive and well designed website allows student access in school and at home to school and state sponsored databases, links to authoritative websites and other teacher-created documents. (self-study, panel presentation, parents, students, teachers, facility tour, classroom observations, department heads, student shadowing)

The school has generally allocated resources, programs, and services so that most students have an equal opportunity to achieve the school's expectations for student learning. While the guidance staff members have many programs that benefit students, such as the work study program, student choice option, and strong guidance seminars, the department could work to increase programs related to general career counseling. The school nurses offer a variety of services to assist all students in achieving the school's expectations. The nurse's office is open before, during and after school. Nurses are able to attend scheduled meetings and respond to emergencies outside of the office, while still providing adequate coverage for individuals seeking assistance. Presentations to sophomore guidance seminars and junior health classes further demonstrate that the nurses participate actively in achieving the school's mission. (self-study, panel presentation, parents, students, teachers, facility tour, classroom observations, department heads, student shadowing)

The school allocates sufficient resources, programs, and services to the special education department so that students with disabilities have the opportunity to achieve the school's mission and expectation for learning. The continuum of services provided by the special education department is based on the students' unique needs and disabilities as determined by the educational team. Students receive services from their resource room teacher; they may enroll in a reading and/or writing skills course, be members of a variety of specialized programs, and sometimes receive additional supports through transition, counseling, and speech and language services. Currently, there are sixteen tutors in the special education department who provide service for individual students within the classroom. These tutors are assigned to support specific students according to their IEPs and are not intended to provide mainstream support for other students on IEPs. Special education services support student learning. (self-study, panel presentation, parents, students, teachers, facility tour, classroom observations, department heads, student shadowing)

The school has allocated sufficient resources and services to the library information services so that students are able to have equal access to achieve the school's expectations for student learning. Junior and senior students are allowed to access the library freely when they are not scheduled in class while freshman and sophomore students may come from study hall with a pass from a classroom teacher. Many students access the library before and after school, in addition to during the lunch

blocks. All freshman students attend a required library orientation with their English classes and leave this orientation with a library services handbook outlining policies, procedures, and services. The library website allows students virtual access to library resources from home and from the classroom. Extended hours, ninth grade library orientation and a comprehensive website ensure that the majority of students can access library services in support of classroom assignments if they choose to do so. (self-study, panel presentation, parents, students, teachers, facility tour, classroom observations, department heads, student shadowing)

Student support personnel enhance student learning by interacting and working cooperatively with professional and other staff members and by using community resources to address the academic, social, emotional and physical needs of students to a varied extent. Guidance counselors work cooperatively with other professionals in the building to assist students. For example, guidance counselors meet frequently with special education staff members and attend student IEP meetings. Counselors also report working well with the deans and attend staffing meetings with deans, school nurses, and other support personnel on a weekly basis to talk about students at-risk. Teachers say that they find guidance counselors responsive when they refer a student and that it is their first option when they have a student who is struggling. Students say that they find their guidance counselors to be accessible. The health services providers in the school also enhance student learning by interacting and working cooperatively with professional and support staff members. The nurse attends all staffing meetings and works cooperatively with guidance counselors and deans. Nurses also attend special education and 504 meetings to provide information and support, especially for students with significant medical needs. The school's high level of staff member collaboration provides a good level of support for students. (self-study, teachers, department heads, observations)

Special education personnel who have offices in all four buildings reach out to the regular education teachers of their students early in the year, distribute copies or synopses of IEPs, and hold meetings on students with significant needs. Resource teachers' schedules have been hand tailored in order that specialists can meet with their students while additional time has been provided for specialists to complete mandated paperwork and network with faculty and staff members and out of district representatives, as well as collateral service providers. Collaboration between special education and regular education teachers supports student learning. (self-study, teachers, department heads, observations)

The librarians at LHS plan lessons cooperatively with teachers who call to schedule library time. This is achieved by phone calls and through e-mails, as well as through personal interaction. In addition, librarians reach out to teachers in a variety of ways to encourage collaboration around classroom projects. Classroom teachers report that librarians are effective in supporting instruction when they bring their students to the library. While some cooperative planning and co-taught classes in the library take place as arranged by the librarians and teachers of ninth grade students, the remaining three

grades of students are left without meaningful access to library instruction. Librarians attend some department meetings but are often busy with student services, since department meetings are held after school and the principal has mandated that the library remain open. As a result, there is a lack of collaboration around curriculum that results in a lost opportunity to support the school's mission and academic needs of students. In general, the student support personnel work cooperatively with other members of staff and faculty in addressing the academic, social, emotional and physical needs of students; however, challenges in finding common time to collaborate may prevent members of the library information services and special education departments from having the impact on student learning consistent with the school's mission. (self-study, teachers, department heads, observations).

Whereas the department of special education was the subject of an outside review within the past five years, other support services are not regularly or formally evaluated. The guidance department uses student surveys to informally evaluate its classroom guidance seminars, but the program has not been evaluated as a whole. Department members do not generally demonstrate the use of data sources such as student dropout rates, the retention rate and the graduation rate to assess and revise their program. There is no formal review process for the health services department. The nursing staff uses internal investigative methods to determine better ways to provide services. Health office professionals attend professional development workshops to learn how to refine their multi-layered approach of assisting the school community with health related issues. (self-study, teachers, department heads, classroom observations)

In response to the recommendations of a previous state audit of special education services, LHS has made significant staffing and program additions. In addition to increased staffing of resource teachers and evaluation team leaders, the LHS Intensive Learning Program and the LHS Language Learning Program have been added. These programs have been further enhanced in order to improve students' learning by the addition of social worker(s), occupational therapists and speech and language personnel. The Multidisciplinary Support Team has increased its academic and therapeutic staff in order to support students in the services they need. However, the special education department at the high school level does not regularly evaluate its services from year to year nor are service providers consulted regarding how support services could be improved. Decisions regarding support service models and revisions in service delivery are determined at the administrative level. Recent changes in the special education administration have resulted in the establishment of different service models and staff members are concerned about the effectiveness of these new models. (self-study, teachers, department heads, observations).

There is no formally defined process for the evaluation and revision of library information services at LHS. While there is no formal review process, librarians have sometimes sent out surveys to classroom teachers asking for feedback on services and programs. Librarians also self-evaluate by using statistical collection and circulation

data and meeting as a department to discuss ways of better implementing and ensuring services to students and teachers. Since there has not been a formal evaluation and no regular process has been established to do so, the capacity of the library services to enhance student learning through revision and improvement is limited. Without formal evaluation and revision, student support services at LHS can achieve only moderate success in developing programs and policies that adequately address student needs. (self-study, teachers, department heads, observations).

Methods used to communicate with students, parents, and guardians at Lexington High School are generally effective in providing information regarding the types of student support services available. The guidance department regularly distributes information regarding its services to the school community through the PTSA newsletter, e-mail, homeroom announcements, parent mailings, and weekly parent group meetings. In addition, a comprehensive guidance department website provides links to outside resources, guidance calendars, college planning timelines, program descriptions, and staff contact information. Middle school and high school teachers plan the transition of students from eighth grade to ninth grade, but communication within the school could be greatly enhanced between the department of special education and classroom teachers. Communication between the special education staffs of the middle and high school assists parents and students in the transition process. As students on IEPs prepare for entry to the high school, high school special education representatives attend team meetings in order to connect with parents and students and provide input regarding appropriate placement and level of services. Informational coffee hours have been held each spring for parents of special education students. Although the individual members of the special education department are dedicated to keeping the lines of communication open between themselves, regular classroom teachers, guidance counselors, parents, and other relevant parties, the time for planning, consultation, and student IEP meetings is limited. Special education staff members have limited opportunity to communicate with school personnel regarding each student's performance, needs and concerns. Specialists may need to communicate with many staff members, depending on their caseload. (self-study, teachers, department heads, parents, observations)

The library department communicates effectively with students and parents to keep them informed about the types of available student support services. At the beginning of the year, ninth grade students receive a packet of materials and a handbook for library services during their orientation. Librarians also contribute approximately four times a year to the parent newsletter and to the superintendent's bulletin. In addition, they contribute to the school's announcement page as needed, use the library website to add notices, and create and hang multiple signs and notices throughout the library. As a result, students and parents are able to be well informed about library hours, services, and programs. (self-study, teachers, department heads, parents, observations)

Student records at LHS are maintained in a confidential and secure manner consistent with federal and state law. The guidance department maintains student cumulative

records in the main guidance office in locked file cabinets, and when no one is in the office doors are kept locked. All student health records and information are kept locked in the nursing suite. Upon graduation, health records are mailed home in an approved, confidential manner. All of each student's special education permanent records are housed at the Lexington Public School Administrative Office. Informal special education files are maintained at the building within the four resource and learning centers for the convenience of the faculty. (self-study, teachers, department heads and classroom observations)

There are sufficient certified/licensed personnel and support staff members to provide effective counseling, health, special education, and library media services. There are sufficient numbers of certified/licensed guidance counselors to provide high-quality and effective services to students at LHS, with one guidance counselor for every 200 students, a range that falls well within guidelines. There are sufficient certified/licensed personnel and support staff members to provide effective health services. LHS has two and one half full-time-equivalent nursing staff members scheduled so that during the majority of the school day there are three nurses on duty. The special education department staffing meets the student/support teacher ratio standards set forth by the department of education, and there have been recent staffing additions. These additions have been primarily for newly instituted programs, however. There are fourteen resource professionals as well as seven multidisciplinary support team specialists and four professionals for the intensive learning program to serve approximately 325-375 students. (self-study, teachers, department heads, classroom observations)

The library department has sufficient staffing to provide a well-managed library facility that is able to contribute effectively to teaching and learning at LHS. There are two full-time-equivalent certified and highly qualified librarians as well as four part-time support staff members. This combination of qualified staffing ensures that librarians are able to effectively use district funding to purchase high-quality and relevant resources as well as to be available for student and faculty instruction in the use of library resources while support staff members provide clerical, purchasing, circulation and technology support. The levels of staffing in all student support services are sufficient to adequately provide for effectively meeting the needs of students. (self-study, teachers, department heads, observations)

The guidance department does not yet provide a full range of guidance services. While high-quality classroom and college placement services are in place, the guidance department does not have a comprehensive program that includes setting specific goals for individual student meetings at each grade level. Counselors are available to students who self-refer for individual appointments, but there are no clear and articulated plans for individual or career counseling. Collaborative outreach to community and social services is also limited. Thus, the needs of students who are not sure about whether to attend college upon graduation are not adequately addressed. While guidance department members collaborate regularly with special education personnel by way of referrals and attending IEP meetings, there is no formal early

intervention process in place. Some progress has been made in this area with the development of a “tiered intervention” program to refer students to either special education or the multidisciplinary program for students with emotional or behavioral diagnoses. Guidance protocols and procedures, while understood and acted on by most counselors, are not easily accessible in a written format. The lack of a comprehensive guidance curriculum and coordinated program results in some inequity among students in the delivery of services. (self-study, teachers, department heads)

The school’s health services are generally able to provide preventive health services and direct intervention services; appropriate referrals; mandated services; emergency response mechanisms, and ongoing student health assessments throughout the day although there have been aspects of staffing, budget, and facility that cause concern about the ability to properly serve all students. School nurses are able to provide training for faculty and staff members in related health and emergency issues, procedures, and protocols. The health office collects and maintains all relevant forms and emergency plans to have on hand should they need. Each classroom has a 911 card to facilitate emergency response. The nurses are available for students who self refer as well as to parents who call with concerns. A recent grant from the department of public health ensures that sufficient staffing will be in place for the next ten years. School nurses cite deficiencies in supplies and equipment in each of the four buildings including wheelchairs, EPI pens, and other first aid supplies. While the school’s health services are generally able to provide the preventive health services and direct intervention services, appropriate referrals, mandated services, emergency response mechanisms, and ongoing student health assessments throughout the day, the out nature of the LHS campus provides challenges in ensuring that all students have access to emergency medical supplies. (self-study, teachers, department heads, facility tour)

The library information services program and materials are not yet fully integrated into the school’s curriculum and instructional program. Although students and teachers in the ninth grade access the library for orientation, class assignments, and research projects, there is a sharp drop-off in the numbers of teachers and students in other grades who use the library for collaborative instruction. While librarians attend department meetings occasionally and last year developed and presented a rough draft of information literacy learning goals, there has been no follow-up this year to plan how these goals might be met through cooperative planning and assignments. Classroom teachers report that budget cuts that resulted in the necessity of teaching five sections instead of four has left them with less time for collaborative planning, yet those who do assign student research say that students often do not have the requisite skills in finding and evaluating information that they need to be successful. At this time there is no fully integrated library information services program at LHS, limiting and hindering the mastery of several expectations that student know how and where to gather data and use technology effectively. (self-study, teachers, department heads, student shadowing, student work, observations)

The library personnel are knowledgeable about the school’s curriculum and support its

implementation. By gathering curriculum guides from across departments, collecting assignments from students as they seek individual assistance and by working with teachers who schedule the library for class use, librarians gain a good understanding of the curriculum. Using collection development policies and online tools to evaluate the collection, librarians then purchase books and databases to fill gaps. Teachers and students agree that they can almost always find what they are looking for in the library, and the many carts with curricular materials on display back up this assertion. Librarians also collect and make available textbooks to students so that they can complete homework assignments without carrying heavy textbooks from home. The library website is designed so that it can be easily updated with links posted for specific assignments. The ability of librarians to understand the school's curriculum and assignments has been affected by the high turnover rate for the library staff members, and some teachers mentioned that this has discouraged them somewhat from collaborating with the library staff. Librarians are extremely knowledgeable about information resources and responsive to requests from teachers and students for curricular materials and, therefore, can support the implementation of the curriculum at a high level. (self-study, teachers, students, department heads, observations)

The library's print and electronic collection supports all areas of the school's curriculum and the diversity of its student body, and is often used to improve teaching and learning. A collection analysis shows that the library has over 35,000 print materials and eleven paid subscription databases available for student and teacher inquiry. A closer examination of the analysis reveals that librarians understand the importance of tailoring the collection to the curriculum with a majority of resources available in curricular areas and a much smaller number in areas not used by students and teachers. The district and school leadership demonstrates an understanding of the importance of a strong library collection by providing an adequate and consistent yearly budget for purchase of new books, technologies, journals, and equipment repair/replacement. Students and teachers have access to twenty-one desktop computers in the library for study and research as well as two mobile laptop carts that are designated primarily for library use. When desktop computers are in full use, students may use laptops on an individual basis in the library. Given that technology concerns are prevalent throughout the school with the perception that much of the school's equipment is out of date, it is all the more impressive that district and school leadership has recognized the importance of continuing to house the most up-to-date technology in the library where the majority of the school's population has access to it. When purchasing, librarians request input from teachers and students by soliciting suggestions via e-mail, newsletter, and posted signs. In addition to the availability of video cameras, LCD projectors, and a multimedia resource room, a pilot program in providing MP3 players for listening to audio books has been initiated. The materials, technologies, and services made available to students and teachers by the library information services are provided in response to curricular and specific information needs, and adequately support improved teaching and learning. (self-study, teachers, student work, students, department heads)

Students, faculty and support staff members have regular and frequent access to the library information services, facilities, and programs during the school day although there is an unclear relation between this access and its importance to the educational experience. The library is open Monday through Thursday 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and on Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and is a place where students from all grades go to study, read, begin or complete homework assignments, use computers to access the Internet for school and personal reasons, and sometimes to sleep. Teachers also use the library to connect with librarians about class projects, borrow technology, and access the professional collection or the teacher resource room. In the 2005-2006 school year, there were an average of 1500 visits to the library each week, and teachers who want to schedule the library for collaborative research projects and assignments are able to do so. The library facility benefited from the 2002 renovation with more than adequate space, appropriate furniture, and a large teaching space that is not used during the day for purposes other than library instruction. School leaders have also demonstrated a positive understanding of the importance of a strong school library by supporting this well designed renovation. However, the existence of an open campus where students have a great deal of free time results in the majority of student library use representing as much a stopping place to refresh and relax, as a support or extension of the learning in the classroom. Although there were 430 classes scheduled in the library from September through February of 2008, librarians describe the level of collaboration for the majority of these classes as being at the level of “consumption or coordination” of instruction. Therefore, although regular and frequent access to the library exists and serves an important function for students and teachers, this access does not always coincide with an integral contribution to the educational experience. (self-study, teachers, students, department heads, classroom observation)

The library/information services program attempts to foster independent inquiry through individual and class instruction in the use of school and community information resources and technologies. Through a comprehensive freshman orientation program as well as collaborative lessons in a ninth grade history research project, students entering LHS are positioned well to gain an initial understanding of the resources and technologies available to them through the library information program. Librarians give instruction in the use of the school’s OPAC as well as the regional Minuteman Library Network, create pathfinders for assignments on which teachers have requested materials or collaboration, research quality electronic sources links for use in updating the library website, and display books and other materials for student interest. Students report that they frequently use the library’s website and have had instruction in how to search databases and the online catalog. In addition, information on plagiarism, writing skills, bibliography formatting, and community resources are available on the site. The provision of an adequate number of support staff members ensures that librarians can pay attention to student inquiry, and they respond by spending a great deal of time out from behind their circulation desk demonstrating a proactive awareness of students to be sure that information needs are met. The sharp drop-off in numbers of classes using the library after ninth grade, however, results in students being less capable or informed about how to conduct high

level inquiry as required by teachers. Many teachers of upperclassmen say that they are surprised that students do not know how to find or evaluate the sources needed to be successful in assignments, but that they do not have the time in their curriculum to bring students to the library for further instruction. The lack of a formal information literacy curriculum also hinders understanding as to what skills the library might teach in the upper grades. As a result, the library and information services program is able to foster student and faculty's ability for independent inquiry only minimally. (self-study, teachers, students, teachers, department heads, observation)

The school adheres to the federal and state laws regarding the identification, monitoring, and referral of students for special education services. However, challenges related to monitoring and the referral of students with disabilities limits the program's effectiveness. The special education liaisons at LHS have an average caseload of twenty-four students, which is within reasonable ranges. However, there is the possibility that this caseload may require communication and outreach to many different classroom teachers and specialists. Although there is evidence of some regular support for students who are struggling (i.e. directed study, teacher content seminars, and extra help sessions before and after school), there is a high incidence of special education referrals due to a lack of a formal early intervention program and process. The referral process is sometimes initiated with insufficient evidence and documentation typically provided by an early intervention team process. As a result, a burden is placed upon the special education department to gather pertinent information in order to proceed with an initial evaluation. Consequently, students may not receive appropriate services in a timely fashion. In addition, there has been an increase in the number of students found eligible for special education by reason of social, emotional, or behavioral diagnoses, as demonstrated by the number of students on IEPs receiving services in the MST. (self-study, teachers, department heads, classroom observation)

Special education services are provided primarily through the resource room model. There is limited opportunity for specialists to observe students in the classroom under the current model. There are few services provided in the mainstream setting by special education teachers. All compensatory skills as well as pre-teaching and re-teaching strategies are provided within the support setting. Although it is reported that the content teachers provide special education accommodations and modifications in the classroom, there is limited evidence of varied instruction or assessment strategies being implemented. As a result of these limitations, when students are reported to be having difficulties in their academic classes, the solution has been to increase their resource support time. Thus, the students' opportunities to access the general curriculum, especially electives, can be negatively impacted. As a result of the limited ability to monitor special education as well as a lack of an early intervention process, special education programs are less effective than they could be. (self-study, teachers, department heads, classroom observation)

Commendations:

1. The accessibility and responsiveness to students, faculty, staff members, and parents of guidance personnel
2. The commitment of district and school leadership to provide sufficient and certified student support personnel
3. The quality and variety of information resources in the library that align with school curriculum and attract student interest
4. The comprehensive website and organized access to electronic resources that align with school curriculum

Recommendations:

1. Create and implement a comprehensive guidance program that is aligned with the school's mission and expectations for student learning, including a plan for individual guidance across grade levels and career counseling
2. Create a set of guidance department policies and protocols that are clear and accessible to all guidance staff members, and communicated to students and parents
3. Implement an improved inclusion model where special education teachers co-teach with content teachers where appropriate.
4. Provide opportunities for regular and special education teachers to collaborate
5. Develop an information literacy skills curriculum of appropriate rigor that integrates library skills within content areas and that aligns with the school's mission and expectations for student learning
6. Include student support programs as part of the curriculum review cycle
7. Institute an early intervention process that provides support for at-risk students

SUPPORT STANDARD

7 COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

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

1. The school shall engage parents and families as partners in each student’s education and shall encourage their participation in school programs and parent support groups.
2. The school shall foster productive business/community/higher education partnerships that support student learning.
3. The school site and plant shall support and enhance all aspects of the educational program and the support services for student learning.
4. The physical plant and facilities shall meet all applicable federal and state laws and shall be in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations.
5. Equipment shall be adequate, properly maintained, catalogued, and replaced when appropriate.
6. A planned and adequately funded program of building and site management shall ensure the appropriate maintenance, repair, and cleanliness of the school plant.

7. There shall be ongoing planning to address future programs, enrollment changes, staffing, facility, and technology needs as well as capital improvements.
8. The community and the district's governing body shall ensure an adequate and dependable source of revenue to provide and maintain appropriate school programs, personnel, services, facilities, equipment, technological support, materials, and supplies for student learning.
9. Faculty and building administrators shall have active involvement in the budgetary process, including its development and implementation.

Conclusions:

Lexington High School is extremely successful in engaging parents and families as partners in each student's education and encouraging their participation in school programs and parent support groups. Lexington High School uses multiple strategies to engage parents and families and foster their participation. There are many LHS parent support groups: LHS Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA), Lexington School Council, Friends of Lexington Music, Art & Drama Students Inc. (F.O.L.M.A.D.S), two separate support groups for debate, Lexington Athletic Association, multiple athletic booster organizations, and Lexington Special Education Parents Advisory Council. LHS teachers and administrators welcome, value, and use parent volunteers in a variety of effective ways, for example, parent volunteers are used to chaperone extra-curricular activities, staff a math tutoring room, and assist with mailings of newsletters. In addition, the school sponsors a number of invitational programs for parents and families including LHS Back-to-School Night, LHS Curriculum Night, LHS Freshman/New Family Orientation Program, junior and senior nights, college informational and financial aid night, weekly parent support groups, and monthly parent educational forums. Lexington High School uses publications such as monthly newsletters from the principal, monthly superintendent newsletters, subscription email lists, The Lexington High School Parent/School Communication Guide and the Student/Parent Handbook, along with multiple websites, to provide parents with important school information. Lexington High School teachers and administrators use telephone and e-mail to provide direct communication with parents regarding student progress. As a result of the high level of parent and family participation at Lexington High School, there is a strong connection between home and school. Although most parents feel included in the school community, there is room for improving the sense of connection to the school for the parents of METCO students. Increased solicitation of these parents may yield a higher rate of involvement, and result in a positive impact on student learning. (parents, teachers, facility tour, self-study, central office administrators, leaders)

In contrast to the high level of parent involvement, Lexington High School is limited in its establishment of productive business and community partnerships to support student learning. While the Lexington Education Foundation (LEF) is a partnership that provides community support, funds professional development, and offers grants to support teachers, the school lacks business and higher education partnerships to support student learning. Previously established school partnerships with colleges and universities have languished in recent years, limiting opportunities to expand available resources and make connections to the wider community. Lexington High School is not currently soliciting and maintaining partnerships with entities outside the school to support student learning. As a result of insufficient partnerships with business, community groups, and higher education, students and teachers are missing enrichment opportunities. (school leadership team, teachers, panel presentation, self-study)

Despite an aging facility, the school site and plant generally support all aspects of the educational program and support services for student learning. There are, however, a number of limitations to the school site that have prevented full use and enhancement of the educational program. While many of these have been addressed, the faculty lacks confidence that these problems have been fully solved. A list of concerns is included for illustrative purposes:

- sewage seeping up through the floor in the workout room;
- inadequate ventilation of the science labs requires some sharing of biology labs;
- the HVAC system in the auditorium is inadequate; when it is working, the level of noise from the system interferes with the ability of the audience to hear and appreciate the performance; when the system is turned off, there is no air flow in the auditorium;
- limited cafeteria space that means that cafeterias cannot accommodate all students for lunch, requiring students to go off campus to eat or eat in school hallways;
- loss of storage space, lockers and reduced bleacher seating; insufficient numbers of athletic fields limits participation in sports and intramural activities;
- insufficient lockers that are available to ensure that each student is issued a locker space, resulting in students carrying coats and books throughout the day.

Science labs appear to be adequate in size and number and are appropriately provisioned to provide for student and teacher needs. In other areas, some instructional spaces in Lexington High School are out-of-date and not appropriate for the needs of teachers and students. Increased attention to improving the physical plant would enhance the school's ability to support improved teaching and learning. (teachers, classroom observations, student shadowing, panel presentation, facility tour, school leadership team)

While there have been in recent years a number of significant concerns with the physical plant that temporarily compromised health and safety in the school, the current physical plant meets all applicable fire, health, and safety regulations. Major incidents related to sewage backups in the physical education area and the World Language building and build-ups of carbon monoxide in the science building are two examples of serious health and safety challenges that have arisen in recent years. While these problems have been addressed, there was a serious impact on programming, and the staff's confidence that similar events will be avoided in the future has been eroded. The building currently meets all requirements related to indoor air quality, but staff members still have the perception that the ventilation system is inadequate. In particular, science teachers will frequently trade lab spaces in order to conduct experiments in the rooms that have the best ventilation. Given the age of the LHS facility and the general dissatisfaction with the 2002 renovation, there is a widespread

feeling that the school community will continue to be challenged with periodic concerns related to health and safety. Unless the school is able to address improvements in maintenance and upkeep of an aging facility, Lexington High School is likely to experience more difficulties with the physical plant that have the potential to have a negative impact on teaching and learning (support staff, building tour, self-study, teachers)

In general, equipment is adequate, properly maintained, catalogued, and replaced, but there are significant concerns related to the level of instructional technology that is available to the faculty of LHS. Teachers report that instructional equipment (other than technology) is available and properly maintained. While much of the furniture supply in the school is dated, it is still functional. More modern furniture and storage would make some instructional spaces more flexible and better suited to a contemporary curriculum, lending themselves to such things as small group work and easier physical movement around the classroom. In terms of maintenance equipment, the custodial staff reports that some equipment is non-functioning; however, they also report that district maintenance personnel are more responsive to emergency repairs than to general upkeep of equipment. There is a clear consensus among LHS teachers and administrators that a greater infusion of technology is necessary to guarantee equitable access to these powerful instructional tools. Only some classrooms are outfitted with ceiling-mounted projectors and there is a very limited number of interactive white boards in the school. Only three technology support staff members are available to service the entire district. The central office reports that the operating budget for FY2009 includes significant increases for instructional technology, support, and professional development. Given the importance of technology for the delivery of a modern curriculum, the district will need to make a long-term commitment to this budget area in order to close the gap from the current state of technology that is available at LHS. While other equipment needs are being met at a satisfactory level, the inconsistent availability of instructional technology has had a negative impact on students and may hinder their ability to compete in a modern world. (central office administrators, teachers, facility tour, department heads, support staff)

With a facility that is clearly showing its age, Lexington High School is struggling to develop an adequate program that ensures the appropriate maintenance, repair, and cleanliness of the school plant. The custodial staff consists of thirteen full-time personnel, including the head custodian. Five of the custodians work the day shift while eight are assigned to the second shift when more of the building cleaning takes place. The district's maintenance staff handles maintenance and repairs. Turn-around time for work orders is inconsistent, with emergency situations obviously taking priority. With a sprawling campus and an extremely high volume of use, both during and after the school hours, the school has visible signs of wear and lack of attention. The tired and unkempt condition of the building indicates a need for a regular schedule of maintenance that includes cleaning, painting, and minor repairs. At present, the custodians are limited in their ability to address more than the daily needs of the building – whether due to inadequate staffing, lack of a set maintenance schedule, or

insufficient training and expectations. Without greater attention and increased expectations to appropriate maintenance and cleanliness of the school plant, school climate for both adults and students will suffer. (central office administrators, school leadership team, support staff, self-study, panel presentation, facility tour)

Lexington has experienced some turnover in administrative positions, which has had a negative impact on long-term planning at the district and school levels. Lexington High School and central office administrators have recently become more focused on planning to address future program, staffing, facility, and technology needs as well as capital improvements. In the last few years, building and central office administrators have been more effective in developing staffing and enrollment projections, a long-term technology plan, and the beginnings of a process to address facility needs. The superintendent uses annual enrollment projections as a catalyst for budget development, particularly as those projections relate to staffing needs, by sharing the document with building and central office administrators. Planning for technology has improved in recent years with the development of both a five-year plan at the district level and a review of technology needs at LHS by a committee headed by the district's on-site technology coordinator. In addition, the school has developed plans to replace the current obsolete student information management software with a web-based program. Follow-through on those plans will be essential if the school is to close the currently existing technology gap. The superintendent reports that the FY2009 budget contains approximately \$155,000 for an architectural study that will be designed to address some of the infrastructure needs of the district. Obviously, the significant challenges of the current LHS facility will be a major focus of that study. With the recent planning efforts related to staffing projections, and technology and capital improvement, LHS has taken important first steps in addressing long-term issues related to student learning. (school leaders, central office administrators, self-study)

The capacity of the community and the district's governing body to ensure an adequate and dependable source of revenue is limited by the political and financial realities of depending on budget overrides to meet identified needs. In recent years, the school has struggled to provide and maintain personnel, services, facilities, and technological support for student learning. In particular, the failure of the 2006 budget override that resulted in the increased teaching loads in a number of departments has had a negative impact on teacher morale. It is important to note, however, that both building and central office administrators are not optimistic about the district's ability to support a return to four teaching periods for a majority of the core academic teachers and would choose to spend any increased funding on items other than restoring the old teaching model. While the school has provided adequate resources relating to textbooks and equipment and has provided additional resources related to addressing social and emotional needs of students, not enough attention has been given in past years to providing appropriate technology. Without community support, the ability to provide resources necessary for the school to achieve its mission will be compromised. (self-study, panel presentation, teachers, central office administrators, school leadership)

Faculty and building administrators have active involvement in the budgetary process, including its development and implementation. The principal reports that the process for budget development is clear and inclusive. He seeks the input of department chairs who seek the input of their teachers as he prepares the initial budget requests for LHS each year. The process includes formal opportunities for department heads and the principal to defend their submissions to either the business manager or the superintendent. The process of budget development is met with general satisfaction by all those involved at LHS, but the implementation of the operating budget has problems. Specifically, members of the school community report a significant time lag and lack of communication related to processing of purchase orders and reimbursements. A good process for budget development allows school leaders to articulate their needs in an inclusive manner, but the current inefficiencies related to the processing of purchase orders compromise the confidence and trust that should be present between the business office and school. (self-study, department heads, teachers, central office administrators, school leaders)

Commendations:

1. The efforts of Lexington High School to engage parents as partners in the educational and extracurricular programs of the school
2. The generous support of the Lexington Education Foundation in responding to budget shortfalls and providing enrichment opportunities and professional development funding
3. The appropriate resolution of emergency facility issues that compromise student and staff health and safety
4. The recent improvements in long-term planning related to staffing, facility, and technology needs
5. The clear and inclusive budget process that meaningfully includes building administrators and department heads
6. The strong and supportive efforts and contributions of parent support organizations

Recommendations:

1. Develop meaningful partnerships with local businesses and institutions of higher education in order to increase opportunities for teachers and students
2. Design and execute a plan for modernizing the current physical plant of the school, including provision of lockers, additional storage space, infrastructure improvements, and updated science facilities

3. Implement the current technology plan in order to ensure equal access to updated technology in all classrooms and provide for appropriate technology support
4. Develop and implement a plan for improved maintenance and cleaning of the current facility
5. Create an inclusive culture by increasing effective outreach to METCO parents

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

This comprehensive evaluation report reflects that 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 Lexington High School. The faculty, school committee, and superintendent should be apprised by the building administration yearly of progress made addressing visiting committee recommendations.

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

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

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

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

LEXINGTON HIGH SCHOOL VISITING TEAM MEMBERS

MAY 4-6, 2008

LEXINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS

VISITING COMMITTEE ROSTER

Judith Evans	Shrewsbury Public	Shrewsbury, MA
Neil Sullivan	Simsbury HS	Simsbury, CT
Elizabeth Santagai	Lowell HS	Lowell, MA
Kathy Davis-McDonough	Duxbury HS	Duxbury, MA
Shawn Landry	Billerica HS	Billerica, MA
Robert Rametti	Brighton HS	Brighton, MA
Christine Smith	Foxborough HS	Foxborough, MA
Tina Grasso	Beverly HS	Beverly, MA
Sean O’Leary	Westford Academy	Westford, MA
D’Anyia Brown	Leominster HS	Leominster, MA
Diane Cileno	Wellesley HS	Wellesley, MA
Margaret Mongiello	NEASC	Wellesley, MA
Carol Sullivan	Wachusett Regional HS	Holden, MA
Kathy Downing	Dracut HS	Dracut, MA
Ann Coates	Hanover HS	Hanover, MA
Carol Peck	Walpole HS	Walpole, MA
Barbara Ripa	Hampshire Regional District	Westhampton, MA

COMMISSION POLICY ON SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE

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

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

Reports of positive substantive changes are not required, but may be submitted to the Director of the Commission at the discretion of the building principal.