

School and Community Profile: Nashoba Regional High School

Nashoba Regional High School is a four-year comprehensive high school located in Bolton, Massachusetts. This northern Central Massachusetts high school (9-12), serves 1037 students from the towns of Bolton, Lancaster, and Stow through the cooperative regional agreement established in 1951 and amended in 1995 to include grades K-12. The total population of the communities in 2013 was 19,542. In the district, there are 1,735 male students and 1,699 female students, with a total student population of 3,434. Of the 1037 students at the high school, 94 are school choice students from surrounding towns. In addition to the high school, the school district has two public elementary schools, Center School in Stow and Mary Rowlandson Elementary School in Lancaster, one public PK-8 school, Florence Sawyer School in Bolton, and two public middle schools, Hale Middle School in Stow and Luther Burbank Middle School in Lancaster. In addition, there are a number of private, independent schools in the district: South Lancaster Academy, Trivium School, Robert Fitzgerald Kennedy Children's Action Corps, and the Doctor Franklin Perkins School. Minuteman Regional High School, located in Lexington, MA, is the district's vocational school.

The rural community of Stow, located 25 miles west of Boston and 28 miles east of Worcester in Middlesex County, is known for its many apple orchards, working farms, and golf courses. According to the 2010 census, the town's population is 6,590, a growth of 11.66% over the previous decade. The town boasts a private airport as well as Lake Boon, an increasingly popular residential area. The many fine old homes in Stow reflect its rich history; the town was formerly known as Pompositticut Plantation. Stow has numerous points of interest, most notably its four golf courses and popular apple orchards. In 2011, the average annual household income was \$121,869 and the median age was 43.5. 72% of residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher. The population of Stow is 94.7% white, 2% Asian, 1.4% Hispanic and 1.85% other.

The rural community of Bolton, located in Worcester County, is also known for agriculture, apple orchards, and golf courses. Bolton today is an exurb of Greater Boston and Worcester, located 25 miles from Boston and 19.7 miles from Worcester. Bolton proudly

protects over 2,000 acres of conservation land in more than 15 conservation areas. The population, according to the 2010 census, is 4,897, a growth of 18% over the previous decade. Median age of Bolton residents is 42.8, and 67% of Bolton residents have attained a bachelor's degree or higher. In 2011, Bolton had an average annual income of \$129,894. Bolton residents are 97.1% white, 1.3% Asian, and 1.6% other.

The rural community of Lancaster, located in northern Worcester County, was founded in 1653 and is the oldest community in Worcester County. Lancaster is 48 miles from Boston and 15.5 miles from Worcester. According to the 2010 census, the population is 8,055, a growth of 9.15% over the previous decade. Lancaster is home to many historic buildings, apple orchards, farms, ponds, and more than 1,000 acres of conservation land. Lancaster is located between Route 2, Interstate 190, and Interstate 495. In 2011, Lancaster had an average annual household income of \$76,765, and a median age of 38.9. 31% of residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher. The population of Lancaster is 80.5% white, 9.5% black, 7.4% Hispanic, 1.2% Asian, and 1.4% other.

The district budget for FY2015 is \$46,759,455, and \$37,480,583 of that comes from funds provided by the communities. Stow's assessment will be \$15 million, an increase of \$843,538 over last year. The town of Bolton is being assessed \$12.5 million, while Lancaster's assessment is \$10.7 million. The remainder of the budget will be funded with Chapter 70 money from the state.

Nashoba Regional High School has a graduation rate of 94.7% and a two-year average dropout rate of .8%. 81.3% of students attend 4-year colleges, 11.6% attend 2-year schools, and 2.6% enlist in the military or take a "gap year". The attendance rate for students is 95.51%, and the attendance rate for teachers is 95.5%. According to the 2012-2013 Massachusetts School and District Profile, Nashoba had an average attrition rate for all students of 4.53%: 4.86% for females, 4.1% for males, 5.96% for High Needs students, and 10.3% for low-income students. According to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education profile, 7.2% of the district's student population is low-income, compared to a state average of 38.3%.

Approximately 5.9% of students qualify for free lunch, compared to a state average of 33.6%.

12.4% of the student population is disabled, compared to 17% across the state. Finally, .6% of students are English Language Learners, compared to a state average of 7.9%. Per pupil expenditure in 2012 was \$12,686, compared to a state average of \$13,636. While per pupil expenditure is less than the state average, the school district's budget is approximately 32% higher than the state minimum required Net School Spending rate.

NRHS has a strong Advanced Placement program and its students do well on MCAS. All AP students take the exams in their subjects. In May 2013, 264 students took 452 exams, and 91.3% scored a 3 or higher. 53% of the class of 2013 took at least one AP class and earned at least a 3 on an exam. The 2013 MCAS results were as follows: 95% Proficient or higher for English Language Arts, 92% Proficient or higher for Mathematics, 87% Proficient or higher for Science and Technology.

Students at Nashoba Regional High School are recognized in a variety of ways. There is an undergraduate awards ceremony every year and a senior awards ceremony before graduation. Academic achievement is recognized through the publication of the honor roll, and for graduation, an honor cord is given to one student from each department to recognize academic success. In addition, the Nashoba Regional Scholarship Foundation awards many students scholarships based on academic and personal achievements.

Nashoba offers a number of unique opportunities for students. Nashoba is one of two high schools offering a state-certified EMT program. In addition, the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics in Cambridge, MA, offers a summer internship to one Nashoba junior every year. NRHS students participate in dual enrollment programs through several local colleges, including Quinsigamond Community College, Middlesex Community College, Mt. Wachusett Community College, Fitchburg State University, and Worcester State University.

Extracurricular activities are very important to the Nashoba Regional High School community. Students participate in athletics, performing arts (band, chorus, and drama), and student groups including a nationally recognized Best Buddies program, a FIRST Robotics program that achieved national recognition, and a highly competitive DECA program. Students write for the Chieftain Press and a school literary magazine, and produce video announcements;

others are socially and politically active in organizations like the Political Awareness Club and the Gay-Straight Alliance. Twenty-seven different sports are available to Nashoba students, including Unified Street Hockey and Unified Track. More than 30 clubs and student organizations were active at Nashoba in the 2013-2014 school year.

Works Cited

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Standard 1 - Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations: Narrative

The Nashoba Regional High School community has engaged in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research-based best practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning. The Nashoba Regional High School community of teaching and support staff engaged in an inclusive and informed process over the past two years to articulate its core values and mission statement supported by current research-based practices and to commit to core values and beliefs about learning in the 21st century.

Beginning in September 2011, the Nashoba Regional High School (NRHS) staff was introduced to the concepts of core values and mission expectations for NEASC. In November 2011, the NRHS staff began conversing about possible mission language and looking at the work of other high schools. In February 2012, the NRHS NEASC Steering Committee outlined to the staff the timetable for the mission statement development process.

In April 2012, a building-based professional development session focused on developing and prioritizing values and expectations. NRHS staff consulted Grant Wiggins' *Schooling by Design*; the NEASC *Guidebook to Developing Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations*, 2009 edition, with particular focus on the exercise from *School Improvement in Maryland*

Schools (k12.org); and Bernie Trilling's and Charles Fadel's *21st Century Skills: Learning for Life in Our Times*. The staff also examined the results of the NRHS faculty meeting discussion from September 8, 2011, which focused on fostering critical thinking skills and clarifying expectations for student learning and school values.

From May to August 2012, a community survey ranked and ordered the values and expectations expressed by the staff. Some 200 community members responded. During a professional development session in August 2012, staff met in departments, providing narratives to describe core values in greater detail. In October 2012, a student survey was administered, with 300 students responding to questions/prompts such as, "Classes are most meaningful when...." A student focus group reviewed the survey responses in November 2012 and provided narrative descriptions. On December 6, 2012, during a community forum, more than 40 stakeholders, including parents, community members, several students, and several teachers and administrators reviewed feedback from staff and students, as well as findings from the research literature. Groups identified verbs that captured values (Communicate, Achieve, Relate, Engage) echoed by all. Between December 10 and December 12, 2012, feedback on core values was solicited by survey from over 250 students. On December 12, 2012, faculty and student working groups held conversations about descriptors to explain the core values in context, identifying also the underlying core value of Integrity. On December 21, 2012, the Steering Committee discussed drafts to be presented to the staff. On January 3, 2013, at a Nashoba Regional High School faculty meeting, departments met to select a preamble statement and vote on specific language around each core value. On January 18, 2013, the Steering Committee finalized two drafts of the NRHS Core Values to be presented to the staff for a vote.

On February 7, 2013, the Nashoba Regional High School staff approved the mission statement and learning expectations from the draft presented (as follows):

We at Nashoba believe INTEGRITY is our foundation. We strive to make it a visible part of everything we do when we:

COMMUNICATE with honesty and respect, clarity and effective purpose, guided by

acceptance and open-mindedness

ACHIEVE through consistent hard work and motivation, striving to realize high standards, to persevere over adversity by fostering the ability to innovate and adapt to change

RELATE as a local and global citizen, practicing empathy and compassion, growing as an individual by finding common ground and appreciating differences

ENGAGE by taking initiative, participating with passion and enthusiasm, collaborating to create something bigger than each of us.

We expect our students to aspire to these values.

We expect our staff to live these values.

We expect our larger community to support these values.

We ask all to **CARE**, make the most of our time at Nashoba, and **OWN IT!**

The Nashoba Regional School District School Committee unanimously approved the new mission statement on March 26, 2013.

As the result of an extensive, deliberate, research-based, and collaborative process, which included varied members from across all strata of the school community, Nashoba has developed a mission statement that clearly identifies its shared core values. Committing to those values, and to making the mission a living document, is a process that is still unfolding.

The school has challenging and measurable 21st century learning expectations for all students which address academic, social, and civic competencies, and are defined by school-wide analytic rubrics that identify targeted high levels of achievement; however, the level of student and staff familiarity with and use of those rubrics is limited. The process of developing school-wide rubrics began during the 2011-2012 school year, when the faculty at-large developed learning expectations for rubrics through surveys, electronic communications via email and Google Docs, and forums in faculty meetings and professional development sessions.

The learning expectations created and accepted by the NRHS staff are the following:

1. (INTEGRITY) The student will apply personal responsibility and demonstrate character in the learning process.
2. (COMMUNICATE) The student will communicate information and ideas clearly and effectively in varied contexts for a variety of purposes.
3. (ACHIEVE) The student uses higher order thinking skills to problem-solve.
4. (RELATE) The student values and demonstrates appreciation for lifelong learning, cultural understanding, and character through empathy, compassion, and collaboration.
5. (ENGAGE) The student will exhibit evidence of creativity, independent thinking, initiative, and enthusiasm.

Not only was the information gathered during this process utilized to clarify the new learning expectations for students and to create new school-wide rubrics, but it also was vital to the crafting of the school's new mission statement and core values.

By December 2012, the NEASC Steering Committee had researched sample rubrics to inform the development of draft school-wide rubrics for NRHS. In early 2013, drafts of the rubrics were passed on to staff members and further developed during department meetings and professional development opportunities. At the March 2013 faculty meeting, the developed expectation indicators were put into a Google Forms survey for staff vote. Later in the spring of 2013, the Steering Committee and other representatives met and agreed upon the major components of the rubrics and tied them to a ratings scale. Over the remaining weeks of the school year, departments further developed the rubrics to address differences in curriculum. Ultimately, the school-wide rubrics were finalized after commonalities were established among the department-level rubrics.

At the outset of the 2013-14 school year, the school-wide rubrics were rolled out. Some departments utilized the rubrics immediately, fully incorporating them into their assessments. Other departments made use of the rubrics incrementally, using pieces of them to develop student assessments. The apparent lack of consensus among staff about the use of school-wide

rubrics is reflected in the Endicott survey results: only 59% of students reported to be aware of and familiar with the school-wide rubrics, and over 25% of students report that they are undecided about their familiarity with the school-wide rubrics. These data suggest that the NRHS staff needs to inform students more clearly about the expectations for student learning and ways to achieve them. In order for teachers to assess student learning and the impact of the school-wide rubrics, teachers are now required to use the school-wide rubrics at least once each quarter. According to the Endicott survey, conducted in October and November of 2013, just 60.5% of students found the 21st century learning expectations challenging, and only 64% of the staff agreed that the 21st century learning expectations are challenging. 78% of staff reported awareness that the school has adopted school-wide rubrics, while 18.5% of staff answered that they are “undecided” about the adoption of these rubrics.

Nashoba has developed school-wide learning expectations, that emanate directly from its core values. These expectations are integral to Nashoba’s school-wide rubrics, which measure adherence to expectations across academic, civic, and social competencies, and which challenge students to excel. However, greater familiarity with and more frequent use of those rubrics is needed to ensure that all students are given the opportunity to meet these expectations. That process starts with greater staff buy-in of the school-wide learning expectations.

The school’s core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school, to a significant degree drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom, but there is not consensus that they guide the school’s policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations. On the Endicott survey, 84% of students reported that they feel safe at Nashoba, and 75% declared that they take pride in their school. According to the February 2014 TELL survey, 84% of staff respondents believe that students understand expectations for their conduct, and 90% believe they work in a safe school environment. Additionally, 85% of respondents believe that the faculty are recognized for their accomplishments. TELL survey results pointed to the following issues as weaknesses: 68% of

respondents do not agree that the faculty and the leadership have a shared vision; 66% disagree that the school leadership consistently supports teachers; and 61% disagree that the school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teachers' concerns about leadership issues. 53% believe there is an atmosphere of mutual respect in the school. While 71% of parents participating in the Endicott survey agreed that they have opportunities to have a say in decision-making at Nashoba, only 41% of students echoed that belief.

Strong majorities of Nashoba's teachers, staff, students, and parents are knowledgeable about the school's core values and 21st century learning expectations. These core values formally appear in teachers' course expectations and syllabi, are being incorporated into instruction and assessments, and appear in administrative documents, as well. In the Endicott survey, 80.5% of student respondents agreed that they are familiar with the school's core values and beliefs about learning, and 83% agreed that the school's core values, beliefs, and expectations not only are actively reflected in the culture of the school, but also drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom. Additionally, 90.8% of parent participants in the Endicott survey agreed that the school's learning expectations were clear to their children. On the same survey, 81.5% of staff members answered that the school's learning expectations regarding curriculum, instruction, and assessment are clear to them, but only 63% of staff agreed that the core values guide the development of policies and procedures and the allocation of resources.

Generally, the core values are becoming more visible within the walls of Nashoba and on the school's website. In March of 2014, Nashoba conducted a "mock site visit" which included staff from the high school and the district, as well as from other school systems. The mock site visit generated considerable anecdotal evidence from students, collected through group and individual interviews, to suggest that students see Nashoba's values through multiple mediums. Staff and students have collaborated to create student-generated core values posters and banners, murals, and a school-wide "lib dub" performance. Staff and administrative efforts have emphasized and "branded" the values in multiple formats, from tee-shirts and staff photos to classroom applications and visibility on the high school website. Students are increasingly

exposed to and asked to consider both the meaning of Nashoba values and the importance of working towards living these values in school and in general. These practices are continuing to evolve and to expand awareness of the core values and expectations for student learning.

The strong foundation formed by the large numbers of students, staff, and parents who recognize the school's core values and learning expectations positions Nashoba well to expand the active reflection of these values in the school culture. However, the absence of strong majorities of students citing familiarity with the school-wide rubrics and of staff agreement that the learning expectations are challenging and measurable illuminates Nashoba's need to emphasize greater staff buy-in and incorporation of the values, expectations, and rubrics into instruction and both formative and summative assessment. The questions of whether the core values drive policies, procedures, and resource allocations, and whether Nashoba's staff and the building and district leadership have a "shared vision" (according to the TELL survey, 70% of staff disagree) is an area of concern and focus moving forward.

Although the core values are included in the classroom and culture of the school, there is room for growth in the way the values drive decisions about procedures and resource allocation. Within the school, space usage and safety are areas where adherence to Nashoba's core values is compromised for expediency. For example, science laboratories have been inadequately ventilated for decades, resulting in a potentially unhealthy environment. In the art department, space has also been a concern, with multiple art classes running concurrently in the same classrooms. In the Special Education department, space is also less than ideal. The high school has five inclusion teachers: three share one room as office and classroom space, the other two share a second room in similar fashion, and none of the inclusion teachers can pull students out to a dedicated, quiet space for instruction, test-taking, or to complete evaluations for IEPs. Space limitations have also created concerning circumstances for students with study periods. Some students opt for and are granted semester- or year-long study passes for the Media Center, but the rest are assigned to study in the cafeteria, a location which anecdotal staff feedback suggests is not an effective space to maximize student achievement and which, in fact, is so over-crowded during the long block/lunch period that it is a significant safety concern. While the

administration and staff have begun to weigh options for moving study halls to classrooms late in the 2013-2014 school year, finding classroom space will be a significant challenge. The issue of maintaining and creating healthful, workable spaces at the high school has been minimally mitigated in recent years' district budgets. These circumstances seem to run counter to Nashoba's commitment to achieve at high levels and compromise Nashoba's students' abilities to do the same.

Other concerns have been raised about the school's physical space, as well. Many teachers (28% of faculty) do not have their own classrooms and move from class to class carrying all of their supplies on carts. Some departments have higher incidences of floating teachers than others. In addition to making access to teachers challenging for students, the dearth of instructional space makes collaboration difficult and extra help extremely public. It is also challenging for traveling teachers to maintain organization (i.e. handouts, texts, etc), maintain space and supplies for projects, and update all necessary information, including homework and agenda boards in each room they use. Some classrooms are not easily accessed, and technology resources within various classrooms are inconsistent and sometimes time-consuming to set up for traveling teachers. These issues minimize teachers' and students' ability to communicate as effectively as possible and inhibit traveling instructors' opportunities to maximize engagement.

In addition to insufficient classroom space, several other significant facilities issues exist, such as the inadequate size of the school's auditorium and limited access to school computer resources. The occupancy certificate for the auditorium expired in 1999, and the auditorium can only hold 60% of the current student body. It is a challenge to communicate whole-school issues and concerns to the student body when they cannot be addressed as a whole group.

The school's computer resources consist of three computer labs for whole class instruction. Two of these labs are contained in the Media Center; one of these is a space with half walls, allowing noise from students using that lab to interfere with other activities in the Media Center and vice versa. The labs have been supplemented by two mobile carts of Google Chromebooks purchased in 2012-2013. During one semester of the 2013-2014 school year, one of the computer labs was dedicated to a business class because the business department did not

have classroom space for that class. Open access to computer technology is often an issue for many classes, as demand for computer labs frequently surpasses supply. The same issue may also be true of Nashoba's wireless network. In spring 2012, the district launched a Bring Your Own Device initiative to be piloted at the high school. Infrastructural issues, piecemeal training, limited student buy-in, and the absence of formal assessment of this initiative have left the high school staff with many questions concerning the program's effectiveness. Changes to routing and access of bandwidth have impacted other areas of the school's network infrastructure, causing further disruptions to needed resources.

In addition to being necessary for classroom instruction, computer resources are also needed for college and career exploration. The guidance department has frequently utilized the computer labs for Naviance instruction with juniors, for freshman orientation programs, and for senior seminars. In 2010, the NRHS guidance department developed an initiative to purchase a dedicated set of Google Chromebooks in order to avoid disrupting the academic use of the school's computer labs. For reasons unclear and uncommunicated, this initiative was shelved for nearly three years with little meaningful feedback. All of these obstacles to technology access pose challenges for emphasizing achievement and generating engagement in future years at NRHS. Similarly, the facility concerns, particularly the space issues and the number of "floating" teachers, are pertinent when considering Nashoba's ability to "live" its core values going forward.

Nashoba has developed a relevant mission statement and set of rigorous learning expectations, and there is wide familiarity with the core values and what they mean. The core values are actively visible in the school, but will not actively reflect the school culture until they are more thoroughly integrated into Nashoba's curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices, and are more clearly evident as factors in the decision making that shapes the school's policies, procedures, and resource allocations.

Nashoba Regional High School does not regularly review or revise its core values.

beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, as well as district and school community priorities. While the school adopted new core values, beliefs, and learning expectations that became the mission statement, the plan for reviewing and revising these documents has yet to be determined. Efforts have been made by the building administration, the Leadership Council (made up of administration and high school department heads), and the NEASC Steering Committee to create a review process for the core values and 21st century learning expectations moving forward, but no formal process has yet been determined. To date, other demands have taken priority over the development of such a process.

Certainly, one notable challenge to creating a formal review process has been a lack of buy-in by the faculty overall. With only 64% of the staff believing that the school-wide rubrics are challenging, a large segment of the faculty seems to call into question the usefulness of school-wide rubrics. At least some of the staff reticence to using the school-wide rubrics could be resolved with the provision of more collaborative work time dedicated to incorporating the school-wide rubrics into classroom practice.

All efforts to make Nashoba's core values, mission, and learning expectations an active and integral part of the school's culture and climate will be limited in scope in the absence of a formal process that regularly reviews individual and school-wide adherence to those standards. If Nashoba truly aspires to live its core values, developing such a process must be a priority.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nashoba Regional High School has developed and is engaged in a dynamic and inclusive process guided by best practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning. The identified core values and learning expectations will guide the school, its staff, its students, and the community to better serve and prepare Nashoba students for future success.

The school has identified challenging and measurable 21st century learning expectations for all students which address academic, social, and civic competencies, and are defined by school-wide analytic rubrics that identify targeted levels of achievement. The expectations are clear in their intent and specific enough for use within subject areas but they also are defined in a way that allows the breadth of the school's curriculum to support their achievement. The minimal level of acceptable achievement is clearly identified in each rubric at a high level of demand.

The school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school, are driving curriculum revision, and are being incorporated into assessments in most classrooms. Nashoba is still at the beginning of the process of utilizing the core values to guide the development and revision of the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations. The school has not yet established a plan and supporting processes for reviewing and revising its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations based on research and multiple data sources and in concert with district and community priorities. However, the frequency with which the core values and 21st century skills are being implemented in expectations, course design, instruction, assessments and guidelines is steadily increasing.

Based on the rating guide for the Standard, Nashoba Regional High School judges its adherence to the Standard as **ACCEPTABLE**.

STRENGTHS

- Strong collaborative effort by stakeholders, including teachers, students, and parents, to

arrive at a consensus regarding the school's core values.

- Interdisciplinary courses between Science and Art, Science and English, English and Social Studies, and English and Business have been developed and will be taught in 2014-2015.
- Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) are given common planning time in the scheduling process
- Exploration process for development of core values and learning expectations was based on current, research-based best practices.
- Strong agreement by all stakeholders that “Integrity” is the foundation of Nashoba’s mission.
- Careful consideration and development of school-wide rubrics over a two-year period.
- 86% of parent respondents believe the school’s learning expectations (academic, social, civic) are challenging (Endicott survey).
- Over 80% of NRHS’s teachers/students/parents understand the core values and 21st century learning expectations (Endicott survey).
- The core values formally appear in teachers’ course expectations and evaluation documents.

NEEDS

- Additional time for stakeholders to delve into best practices research.
- Greater teacher use of and student familiarity with the school-wide rubrics.
- Resolution of deficiencies in building infrastructure and available space in the physical plant in order to provide students with opportunities to fully “live” the core values.
- Greater emphasis on understandings and applications of 21st century learning expectations.
- Increased student and teacher investment in the core values.
- An established plan for the regular review and revision of the core values, expectations for learning, and school-wide rubrics.

Core Values committee:

Diana Durr (Guidance)

Sara Egan (Co-Chair - Mathematics)

Erika Elzey (World Language)

Matthew Ettinger (Wellness)

Judith French (Fine/Performing Arts)

Tracy Landry (Library/Media)

Pamela Lowe (English)

Susan Mianulli (Fine/Performing Arts)

Beth McNamara (Wellness)

Kim Rocha (English)

Angela Routhier (Special Education)

Allyson Wandell (Special Education)

Andrew Zercie (Co-Chair - Special Education)

Standard 2 - Curriculum: Narrative

The curriculum is moving towards being purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Nashoba's curriculum is currently being updated to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Upon adopting the 21st century learning expectations, NRHS staff invested significant time and effort toward expanding awareness and infusing the five core values (integrity, communicate, achieve, relate, and engage) -- and the corresponding learning expectations -- into the culture of the school. Currently, course expectations for all high school classes are expected to reflect these five values. However, since the adoption of these learning expectations, only two hours of professional development time has been allotted for the entire staff to focus on integrating them more thoroughly into the curriculum. Some departments, such as Math, were paid to do an extra week's work during the summer to incorporate the learning expectations into their curriculum. However, the process of integrating the new learning expectations into curriculum has not been emphasized across all departments, and thus, their implementation is likely not uniform across subject areas. Development of the written curriculum is a main point of focus for professional development for the 2014-2015 school year.

Currently, staff in all fields of study have completed hard-copy, frameworks-based

curriculum guides. However, these curriculum guides are at various points of revision and integration into the Atlas Rubicon software program. All classes are charged with the responsibility of providing students with the means to achieve their highest intellectual potential, as well as instilling high ethical and behavioral standards. However, according to the Endicott survey, only 57% of the staff agree that “the school’s formal curriculum design ensures that all students practice and achieve all the school’s learning expectations.” In addition, the departments are expected to encourage students to work together in ways that benefit and develop learning communities within the classroom, within the school, and beyond the school. According to the Endicott survey, 45% of students surveyed agreed that what they are learning in classes is related to learning experiences in other courses and in their lives outside of school.

Graduation requirements, as outlined in the Program of Studies, support Nashoba’s 21st century learning expectations. The student body is provided with access to appropriate and rigorous coursework. The school’s College Preparatory (CP) curriculum, which serves the lower academic levels, is reviewed at the department level to ensure that these students are also held to high academic standards. However, there is no formal, school-wide process for this review, and it occurs on an informal and inconsistent basis across departments. Interviews with Guidance staff members indicate that students transferring in from other school districts are consistently placed in lower academic levels than they had been in at their previous schools, reflecting the rigorous nature of the taught curriculum at Nashoba. In addition, returning alumni consistently report that they are prepared beyond their peers for college level courses at a variety of public and private post-secondary institutions.

However, there is a segment of the Nashoba population that is not currently fully served by the school’s curriculum: primarily students placed in Learning Center 3 (by definition, these are students who are “at-need,” if not “at-risk”) and the majority of students attending Nashoba from the Robert F. Kennedy Children’s Action Corps’ Lancaster Residential Treatment Campus (RFK). Most of the students who attend NRHS from RFK are behind in credits and courses required for graduation and have significant gaps in their educational history, and are dealing with a range of non-academic, familial, and/or social/emotional challenges that impact their

ability to access and connect with the curriculum. Nashoba has approximately 12 students from RFK at any given time -- that number has been rising over recent years. These students, combined with approximately 70 “general education” students (who are identified as being at-risk because of two or more failing grades and/or behavior problems), comprise just over 7% of the student population. They often find it challenging access relevant options in the curriculum. The elective offerings at Nashoba include only a small number of -- and thus, high competition for -- industrial arts, cooking, and technology classes. A review of both the NRHS Program of Studies and teacher interview data suggests that there is a critical need for innovative curriculum and pedagogy for students who struggle in a more traditional classroom environment, as well as a need for more creative curriculum options for students who are not high academic achievers. For example, in the core subjects, only the Engineering for The Future class is taught in a hands-on environment. Also, the structure of the school day does not allow for students to elect alternative school schedules or diploma pathways. Instead, we lose students to programs like Gateway to College (a dual enrollment program offered by Mount Wachusett Community College), Job Corps, and Fitchburg Alternative High School.

The NRHS curriculum is currently being designed and revised to ensure that all students practice and achieve the school’s 21st century learning expectations. Frameworks-based curriculum guides are being integrated into Atlas. The staff require more training and time to work on the Atlas system -- a point of focus for 2014-2015. Additionally, curriculum work needs to focus on relating classroom learning to real life and to ensuring that students with academic challenges, students who are “at risk,” and alternative students all have access to opportunities to achieve these expectations.

The curriculum is written in a somewhat common format that includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, instructional strategies, assessment practices, and skills. The school’s 21st century learning expectations are not uniformly incorporated into the written curriculum but are partially incorporated into the taught curriculum. The NRHS curriculum is written in two formats: in hardcopy binders and in the Atlas Rubicon web-based program. Only

very recently has the Atlas format been updated to reflect our current mission statement and 21st century learning skills, and the process of incorporating them into the electronic curriculum guides is ongoing. The paper format introduced in 2007 included Understanding By Design elements such as statements of “Big Ideas” and “Essential Questions.” These curriculum documents have not been updated since 2009. Since the incorporation of the Common Core standards, Atlas Rubicon has been selected as the common format for NRHS curriculum documents, and the Math and English Departments have completed the process of adapting their curriculum to align with Common Core into the Atlas format. Other departments are still working to complete this transition. The paper copies of the curriculum do contain lists of instructional strategies; however, while Atlas Rubicon offers a section for instructional strategies, these sections often remain blank due to the fact that inadequate professional time has been provided to departments for the consistent adoption of Atlas Rubicon. Neither the district calendar nor the high school master schedule prior to 2014-2015 has provided sufficient professional development time or opportunity to generate staff familiarity with the Atlas software, or to complete the conversion of the written curriculum from hard-copy binders to the electronic Atlas database. While the current school year has made updating curriculum in Atlas a priority, professional development time allotted for task is limited, and opportunities for collaboration within the master schedule are informal and few. In the Endicott Survey, 55% of staff members feel either unfamiliar with or disconnected from the common curriculum format.

As a result of the lack of time for professional development within the yearly calendar and within the master schedule, Nashoba staff are limited in their ability to adequately collaborate, update, or enhance the written curriculum. These same obstacles limit individual staff members’ ability to share innovations in the taught curriculum. Progress in these areas will occur only if the staff is provided with more time to utilize the tools and talents available.

The curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through

inquiry and problem-solving, higher order thinking, cross-disciplinary learning, authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school, and informed and ethical use of technology.

According to the Endicott survey, 80% of students indicated that they feel the curriculum at Nashoba Regional High School is challenging. Additionally, on the Endicott survey, 85% of the staff indicated that the curriculum in their department(s) emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge.

Staff members have been provided with a common curriculum map in Atlas Rubicon and in previous curriculum guides. These maps include essential questions, enduring understandings, essential skills, and content standards. However, there is no designated area in these templates that requires faculty members to specifically identify ways that students will gain depth of understanding through inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills. As such, an emphasis on these skills is inconsistently reflected in courses in which the subject-specific standards require it.

Just under 50% of NRHS students agreed that they were provided opportunities to apply knowledge and skills outside of the classroom. This number seems to contrast with the fact that Nashoba provides numerous opportunities for authentic learning through such programs as the Bolton Ambulance Service's EMT training course, the Clinton Saving Bank in-school banking program, the DECA club, the Reality Fair, Career Day, the Robotics club, the art-based Mural club, and various other extracurricular clubs in which students engage in journalism, yearbook design, literary magazine editing and design, political activism, and more. For example, the EMT program at Nashoba Regional High School is one of only two in the state of Massachusetts where students are trained and certified as Emergency Medical Technicians. Students in this program serve the community of Bolton by being on call from 7:15 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, throughout both the school year and summer. During these daytime call hours, student EMTs respond to real-life emergency situations as first responders. Likewise, Nashoba's banking program, offered in conjunction with Clinton Savings Bank, trains students to work as bank tellers in both the bank branch at school and at five other branches of Clinton Savings Bank.

Some students also take on paid internships in the community. Nashoba has a variety of programs that allow students to apply their knowledge to authentic situations outside the classroom. For example, the Pirozzolo scholarship gives a grant to a student and faculty mentor to work on a proposal with a community service component. The Bridges to Malawi Program is a healthcare mission trip to Malawi, Africa, in which a local doctor offers the opportunity for one high school student to accompany him and his Tufts medical students to administer healthcare in this impoverished region. The Harvard Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory Summer Internship is offered to a rising senior. The student selected works at the Observatory in a scientific research role studying Solar Physics alongside 300 PhD scientists and college interns. In addition, students have developed several software applications to benefit the Nashoba community, including the AV Checkout online system and an automated Career Day scheduler.

Although minimal interdisciplinary courses have been offered at NRHS to date, these course offerings have been expanded for the 2014-15 academic year. According to the Endicott survey, only 60% of students agreed that information in one course could be used in other classes and only 30% of the staff agreed that the curriculum emphasizes cross-disciplinary learning. Recognizing that this is an area of challenge in the school's curriculum, the school's plan is to increase these offerings for 2014-15. In the 2014-15 Program of Studies, some of the interdisciplinary course offerings include: Freshman World Humanities, Maritime Studies in Science and Literature, The Literature and Science of Epidemiology, and Living Locally. World Humanities is a thematically taught course that will focus on major events in World History through the lenses of literature, non-fiction texts, art, and music. Maritime Studies in Science and Literature is an interdisciplinary course designed for students interested in studying the ocean through an integrated curriculum including science, public policy, and humanities. While Nashoba is expanding these course offerings, some of these courses may not be able to run if there is limited student interest/enrollment and or insufficient staffing. In the next few years, the intent is to continue to refine and expand these programs.

Informed and ethical use of technology is a critical skill that is emphasized at Nashoba Regional High School, as well. In order to ensure that all students are equipped with the skill to

use technology responsibly, a clear policy is outlined in the school's Personal Device Network Policy (created by the Bring Your Own Device initiative) and on the NRHS website, and is included in the student handbook. Both parents and students are required to sign an Informed Use of Technology agreement at the beginning of the school year, indicating that they have read and understand the school's policies. On the Endicott survey, 84% of student respondents stated that they are knowledgeable about the ethical use of technology. While no formal course exists that specifically teaches these skills, informed and ethical use of technology is emphasized across the content areas. According to the same survey, 85% of staff agreed that these skills are emphasized in the existing curriculum.

NRHS curricula emphasize depth of understanding, higher-order thinking skills, inquiry and problem solving, and the informed, ethical use of technology. Efforts are under way to improve offerings in cross-disciplinary learning. While a common curriculum map exists, more training on the use of Atlas Rubicon and more time for staff to work on curriculum mapping are needed to ensure that the above-mentioned skills are reflected in all subjects. Greater awareness of existing course offerings and extracurricular options to bring classroom learning into the "real world" needs to be generated to reach those Nashoba students who perceive limited opportunities to apply what they learn beyond the classroom.

Across all disciplines, there is no consistency of clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum. There are varying levels of alignment between the written and taught curriculum. The written curriculum is not uniform across all departments and is not up to date with Nashoba's current core values and 21st century learning expectations. Furthermore, it is not clear that all the complexities of the school's taught curriculum are to be found in its written curriculum.

Teacher-developed curriculum guides exist, and published syllabi and course expectations are available for each course and department. Contradictory to the evidence found by this committee, the Endicott survey indicated that 72% of the staff feel that the written

curriculum and the taught curriculum are aligned. Courses with a corresponding MCAS or AP exam have curricula that are aligned with the College Board or state curriculum standards.

However, various discussions, inquiries, and research make it evident that Nashoba's written curricula exist in inconsistent formats and, as such, are neither easily nor readily accessed by administrators, department heads, or teachers to truly determine whether the written and taught curriculum are aligned. Curriculum guides exist in limited quantities and levels of development in Atlas, while hard-copy binders with curriculum guides are outdated. Many curriculum guides lack full implementation of the Understanding By Design curriculum training and expectations mandated in 2007-2008 and/or the more recent school-wide expectations.

Over recent summers, staff members have been provided with stipends to participate in Atlas training and Understanding By Design curriculum mapping training, and are charged with developing units within Atlas. A number of teachers are currently mapping curricula for courses such as the new interdisciplinary electives. For the 2014-2015 school year, professional development time will be dedicated to training on curriculum development, with time to collaborate, map, and write curricula in Atlas. The assistant principal has also proposed that department heads be provided with training in curriculum development protocols and instruments in order to empower department heads to maximize time in department meetings, Professional Learning Team meetings, and professional development days for work on curriculum development. These efforts will allow Nashoba staff to develop curriculum according to more formalized expectations. The district currently has a long-term curriculum review cycle in place. As previously stated, many staff believe current efforts to make curriculum revision and alignment a priority are hampered by the limited time for such work on the professional development calendar, and within the master schedule.

Currently, efforts are under way to ensure that there is clear alignment of the written and taught curriculum. Efforts include professional development on Atlas, realignment of outdated curriculum guides, curriculum mapping, and implementation of District-Determined Measures (DDMs) to ensure coordination of instruction over similar courses and among the varied staff.

Time must be expanded within the yearly calendar and allotted within the master schedule if efforts are to be maintained over the long term.

Curricular coordination and vertical articulation exist inconsistently between and among academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district. On the Endicott survey, 58% of the staff disagreed that “teachers have sufficient time to be engaged in formal curriculum evaluation, review, and revision work.” There is not an adequate amount of time allotted for collaborative curriculum work. Especially in recent years, department meetings and professional development time have been consumed by state-wide initiatives and NEASC preparation.

Similarly, an inadequate amount of time has been allotted for vertically aligning curriculum. The World Language department has a vertically aligned curriculum in place and the members of the high school department meet regularly with the members of the department at the middle schools. The Math department has a vertically aligned curriculum in place within the high school. The opportunity for Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) has been introduced this year, allowing participating staff 46 minutes during an eight-day cycle to meet and collaborate on pre-approved topics which may include -- but do not always relate to -- vertical alignment of the curriculum. Department meetings occur monthly and last 60 minutes; however, curriculum work (entering curriculum into Atlas Rubicon, vertical alignment, curriculum review, development and evaluation), has not been the focus of these meetings, due to other priorities, such as NEASC preparation and shaping DDMs.

Communication between NRHS and the sending schools varies by department. There is little to no consistency in how communication takes place. Science, Math, World Language, and Special Education departments seem to have stronger lines of communication; others, such as Wellness, Technology and Engineering, and Social Studies, have sparse and infrequent communication. Limited professional development opportunities are provided for high school teachers to meet with those from sending schools in job-alike meetings.

Recently a STEM coordinator has been added to the district personnel, which has

improved the lines of communication in Mathematics, Science and Technology. The STEM coordinator acts as the liaison between NRHS and the sending schools mostly around transitions and the placement process for incoming freshmen. There is a district committee focusing on the newly adopted Science and Engineering standards; this committee's primary focus will be the vertical alignment of the updated curriculum once mapping is underway, and they will meet on a monthly basis during the upcoming school year. It is hoped that structured time will be set aside to enable vertical communication and alignment in other content areas, as well. The World Language department has developed a placement exam for all incoming 9th graders, and the exam has opened lines of communication between NRHS and the sending schools. This process has aided in the placement of 9th graders and, as a result, has made for a smoother transition for both students and staff.

While the Office of Teaching and Learning website acts as a repository for curricular work and an access point to links for assessments, standards, and resources, it is unclear how many people are aware of these resources or have accessed them.

While vertical alignment of the curriculum occurs in some departments, not enough professional development time is allotted for teachers to work on curriculum review, development, and evaluation. Channels of communication between NRHS and its sending schools must be improved in order to ensure that all students entering NRHS have smooth transitions to the high school curriculum and are adequately prepared to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are sufficient to implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities; however, few of these resources are adequate for supporting curriculum growth or excellence. Computer technology at Nashoba Regional High School is adequate to allow internet access and to allow students to acquire and practice basic computer skills. The "Bring Your Own Device" initiative was piloted in 2013 and

more fully implemented in 2014, although the effectiveness of this initiative is debated. The Life Skills and Transitions classes have supplied iPads for all their students and the Special Education department has 12 ChromeBooks that are housed in the Learning Center. All students and staff members can borrow ChromeBooks from the Media Center; these are used often not only for student work (both collaborative and independent), but also for responding to or developing surveys, providing web access for research, completing course sign-ups, and participating in the Guidance curriculum. Projectors have been added to every classroom, and SmartBoards are available in select classrooms. However, not enough computers are available for students for the completion of work throughout the day during non-class time.

Some departments still do not have enough textbooks and supplies, as reported in the last NEASC report. Anecdotal evidence from teacher interviews shows that some teachers have to ask students to access e-books, but at no cost to the student. Other departments, because of insufficient materials, have had to use outdated textbooks that were due to be recycled. Facilities are insufficient in that some classrooms don't have enough seating for the number of students in a class and some teachers compensate for lack of overall space in the school by teaching in different rooms and moving their instructional materials on rolling carts. On the Endicott survey, 84.8% of students surveyed reported that the school provides them with the instructional materials (textbooks, computers, equipment and supplies) they need for each course, while only 55.4% of the staff agree with the above statement. 92.4% of the parents feel that the school provides adequate materials for their child's classes, possibly attesting to teachers' skill in providing high quality instruction despite lagging resources.

In certain areas of the school, the lack of sufficient space is particularly acute. Three teachers are scheduled for the same period in the gymnasium and these classes are sometimes combined. The fitness room needs to be updated. Teachers and classes using the auditorium are often frustrated by conflicts with the space, including: classes double-booked there (e.g., RAD and Acting), materials for activities (e.g., props for the play or risers for a concert) interfering with classes scheduled there, or events such as Advanced Placement testing or voting which are prioritized over classes scheduled there. A more complete description of all the physical

challenges that impact the effective delivery of the school's curriculum can be referenced in the Community Resources report.

Another curricular difficulty at Nashoba is the fact that there are not enough classes to meet the needs of all students. School Committee policy mandates that high school students be registered for at least 25 credits each year, but NRHS has never been able to meet that requirement. While the school has come close to meeting this goal, it was able to do so only by "forcing" students into classes (e.g., making them take extra electives, double gym classes, etc.) in order to help them achieve the required number of credits.

Although Nashoba added teachers in the 2013-2014 school year, and will add more for 2014-2015, these additions were primarily in core academic subjects. While the additional staff will help to decrease class sizes, few will help NRHS offer a broader elective selection. NRHS just graduated a senior class of 234 students and expects the incoming freshman class to be about 275. The Guidance department registered almost all students for at least 25 credits, but that meant there were 150 requests for Introduction to Business and places for only 50 students. Other electives, including Foods and Digital Photo, were over-requested by 150-200 students.

Only 38% of the staff surveyed in the Endicott study believe the school has sufficient professional staff to implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. 37% of the staff feel the facility fully supports the implementation of the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. Only 30% of staff surveyed feel that co-curricular activities are adequately funded. 71% of parents surveyed believe the school's facilities adequately support the programs and services.

Although staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are enough to implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs, some learning opportunities are limited by insufficient resources. Greater attention must be given to the issues of class size, course materials, and increased staffing to permit additional courses and alternative pathways to graduation.

The district does not provide the school's professional staff with sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research. While 66% of staff indicated that they are directly involved with curriculum evaluation, review, and revision, only 17% of staff responding to the Endicott survey agreed that they have sufficient time to be engaged in these activities. Only 38% of the staff agreed that the school has sufficient professional staff to implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular program and other learning opportunities. Additionally, only 30% feel that co-curricular programs are sufficient. Although staff reported that they engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching, and they use resources and dedicated formal time to implement professional development, staff has limited opportunities to do so. Common planning time is not formally incorporated into the master schedule for teachers and staff. However, some teachers and staff create common planning time on an informal and voluntary basis. Annually, a number of teachers facilitate and/or participate in yearly book groups to explore new, more effective means of teaching and meeting student needs. Staff can volunteer to attend professional development academies which are held in the spring and summer. Individual staff members regularly volunteer to engage in their own professional development via district Summer Academy offerings, high school professional book groups, after-school Tech Tuesdays hosted by the Business department, and voluntary common planning time.

According to the Mass TELL survey (March 2014), 84% of respondents said that they spend less than an hour of their time on professional development (PD) in a week. The remaining 16% of respondents reported that they spend less than 5 hours on their professional development in a week. In fact, 16% of respondents to this survey also indicated that the PD offered is not impactful, different content should be covered, and/or there is not enough time set aside for meaningful PD. Respondents reported that much of the district-provided professional development is not relevant and desired more opportunities to have unstructured time with colleagues to collaborate on specific work with students or to develop cross-departmental ideas. Another recurring theme in the responses was that professional development provided through

district programs was not directly applicable to course content and it was necessary to find other avenues to enhance subject matter. Only 11% of responders felt positive about their professional development activity within the district.

The district does not provide the professional staff with the time or financial resources to collaborate on the development, evaluation, or revision of the curriculum.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Nashoba Regional High School curriculum continues to be a work-in-progress. While the school has committed to learning expectations and core values for the education of all students, neither the written curriculum nor the taught curriculum consistently reflect that commitment. The majority of students and staff members agree that the curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking. However, most opportunities for applying the curriculum to real-life situations occur outside of the core academic curriculum.

Alignment between the written curriculum and the taught curriculum is inconsistent, and vertical coordination and articulation of curriculum is not visible in many subject areas. The prevailing opinion among staff members is that significantly more resources and time must be committed in order for the curriculum to be developed and improved to meet the needs of the current student population. Similarly, staff believes the district must provide more consistent and focused support for teachers to conduct regular evaluation and revision of curriculum.

Based on the rating guide for the Standard, Nashoba Regional High School judges its adherence as **LIMITED**.

STRENGTHS:

- Rigorous curriculum that prepares students for appropriate post-secondary plans

- Authentic learning opportunities both in and out of the classroom
- Emphasis on the practice of critical thinking and problem solving skills
- Diverse curricular offerings

NEEDS:

- Time to collaborate on vertical alignment, Common Core, interdisciplinary curriculum and a common written format for curriculum
- Resources to enhance curriculum offerings including space, updated technology, and sufficient materials and staff
- Increased attention to curricular opportunities and alternative graduation pathways for at-risk students
- Formal oversight of curriculum development, communication, and revision

Curriculum committee:

Corrine Cressman (Science)

Nuria Diaz Canales (World Language)

Johnna Doyle (Co-Chair - Science)

Emily Frisch (Math)

Dan Glover (Guidance)

Michelle Hoover (English)

Heidi Kalinowski (Special Education)

Richard Kempskie (Math)

Laura Lancelotta (Special Education)

Elsbeth Macdonald (Special Education)

Donald Nicole (World Language)

Kerri-Ann O'Donnell (Co-Chair - Administration)

Anne Zoller (Special Education)

Standard 3 - Instruction: Narrative

Teachers' instructional practices are continuously examined for improvement, and are

somewhat consistent with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations. Approximately 70% of teachers responding to the Endicott Survey agree that they continuously examine their instructional practices to ensure consistency with the school's core values. 98% of teachers surveyed said they use formative assessments, promoting communication between teachers and students and advancing the achievement goals for students. Of those who use formative assessments, more than 75% describe using them two or more times per week. The means for assessing formatively vary widely and include activators, summarizers, pair-shares, and check-in quizzes. On the Endicott survey, the effectiveness of formative assessment is acknowledged by 65% of students and 70% of parents who agreed that their teachers' suggestions help students improve their work. Additionally, 40% of students reported that teachers ask for their ideas or opinions on how to improve their teaching practices.

A number of teachers have examined instructional practices through Nashoba book groups, educational initiative groups, and individual efforts, and then reported back to the entire faculty. Members of the book groups read and discussed books selected to promote reflection on relating to, communicating with, and engaging students. These Educational Initiatives groups, guided by varied themes such as collaboration and creativity, have developed and implemented novel ways to deliver and engage students in content; after self- and collaborative critique, teachers involved have reported their experiences and findings to the entire faculty. Additionally, individuals who, on their own initiative, tried new teaching strategies, such as flipping the classroom, have reported their experiences during faculty meetings.

There is a concern among a significant number of staff that instructional leadership from above is not robust at Nashoba, and that the examples previously mentioned involve individual teacher initiative, not a sustained systemic and school-wide approach to exploring teaching and learning. In an internally-generated survey, staff were evenly divided, 50% responding no and 50% yes, when asked if the leadership team and staff engage in professional discourse for inquiry. According to Endicott results, 57% of staff disagreed or were undecided as to whether the school's professional development program enables teachers to acquire and use skills to improve instruction and assessment. Teacher interviews conducted during a "mock site visit" in

March of 2014, and throughout the self-study, frequently expressed concerns that insufficient time in the master schedule and the professional development calendar inhibit effective collaboration around instruction. (For more information, reference Indicator 8 from the School Culture standard report)

While some teachers participate in initiatives and individual activities that provide opportunities for them to examine their own teaching practices, there is no formal process (apart from the formal teacher evaluations) by which teachers' instructional practices are continuously examined to ensure that they are consistent with the school's core values, beliefs and 21st century learning expectations. More formal, systemic opportunities should be provided for teachers to examine their own practices and to collaborate with colleagues in order to improve their instructional practices.

Teachers experiment with varied instructional practices, somewhat in support of the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Nashoba teachers, by strong majorities, believe they personalize instruction, engage students in cross-disciplinary learning, and are progressing towards engaging students as active and self-directed learners. They report that they frequently emphasize inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking, are moving towards helping students apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks, often engage students in self-assessment and reflection, and frequently integrate technology.

However, the results of the Endicott survey indicate that there is a large disparity between staff members', students', and parents' perceptions of personalizing instruction. Approximately 85% of staff surveyed agreed that they personalize instruction to support students' achievement of the school's learning expectations. Students have opportunities for choice in how they communicate understanding, such as via one-on-one conferencing, receiving and providing feedback on long term assignments, and participating in formative assessments that gauge their understanding and allow teachers to adjust instruction. In contrast, roughly 62% of parents and slightly less than 30% of students were in total agreement that teachers personalize instruction.

Notably, the largest group of student responses to this prompt was the 40% who answered that they were “undecided.” Clearly, there is some ambiguity in the ways students perceive the presence of personalized instruction. Only 38% of students noted that teachers spend one-on-one time with them. Based on the district-wide professional development from the last decade, staff members seem to interpret personalizing instruction to mean differentiating and individualizing instruction; whereas, students may have a different interpretation. Data from the mock site visit in March of 2014 saw evidence of personalization occurring in 50% of the classrooms visited.

Although the Endicott survey did not ask specifically about cross-disciplinary instruction, it is loosely addressed in Curriculum standard 2.3, where less than one-third of staff agrees that there is an emphasis on cross-disciplinary learning. Slightly more than half of the student respondents agreed that teachers included topics from other disciplines in their classes. Currently, Nashoba offers several cross-disciplinary classes: World Humanities, which combines World History and Freshman English (team taught by an English teacher and a Social Studies teacher); The Literature of Epidemiology, which combines science and Senior English (team taught by an English teacher and a Science teacher); Maritime Science and Literature, which combines science and Senior English (team taught by an English teacher and a Science teacher); and Molecular Gastronomy, which combines Biology and Foods (co-taught by a Science teacher and the Foods teacher).

The Endicott survey did not address engaging students as active and self-directed learners but 65% of students agreed that they are provided the opportunity to choose topics on some of their assignments. However, in the mock site visit, observations of 50 classrooms saw only about 50% student engagement resulting from personalized, cross-disciplinary, and self-directed learning.

Approximately 84% of both staff and parents surveyed agreed that teachers emphasize inquiry, problem solving, and higher-order thinking to support the achievement of the school’s learning expectations. While students were not asked a similar question, these areas of emphasis are evidenced by the fact that students regularly present work, drive discussions, engage in debates, and perform experiments.

The Endicott survey data indicates that approximately 58% of students are in agreement that they have the opportunity to assess their work. Opportunities routinely provided to students include the use of rubrics, revision guidelines as part of the writing process, peer evaluation, journals, diaries, self-reflections, and opportunities to correct test errors.

The fact that 74% of students surveyed indicated that they incorporate technology in their work is consistent with staff integration of Google Drive; the bring-your-own-device initiative; the integration of Chromebooks in classroom activities; scientific technology such as Pasco probes to measure heart rate, ventilation, EKG, muscle movement, etc., spectrophotometry and gel electrophoresis; mathematics software such as Sketchpad, Geogebra, Maple, Fathom, and Excel, as well as the widespread use of many and varied websites.

While Nashoba teachers are making concerted efforts to vary their instructional practices to support achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by personalizing instruction, engaging students in cross-disciplinary learning, engaging students as active and self-directed learners, emphasizing inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking, applying knowledge and skills to authentic tasks, engaging students in self-assessment and reflection, and integrating technology, time for teachers to collaborate to improve instruction is limited and informal. More common planning time and meaningful professional development would ensure a higher rate of achievement among teachers in reaching these goals. Facilities such as computer labs and science labs are insufficient for all teachers to incorporate technology on a regular basis and for all students to be able to achieve the school's 21st-century learning expectations. Effort must also be made to help staff and students develop a common understanding around the meaning and importance of personalized instruction.

Teachers adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by using formative assessments (especially during instructional time), strategically differentiating, and by purposefully organizing group learning activities; efforts are underway to further address

providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom. At Nashoba, teachers are responsive to many students' varied learning styles. Strong majorities (85%) of student respondents to the Endicott survey indicated that their teachers use group activities and varied instructional strategies in their courses. 86% of staff members indicate that they use differentiated instructional practices to meet the individual needs of their students. An overwhelming majority of parents indicated that teachers engage their child as an active learner and provide additional support when needed. Teachers employ many different strategies to respond to students varied learning styles, including adjusting pacing and instructional practices based on feedback from assessments, chunking long-term projects into smaller, more achievable parts, using logbooks to help students organize their thinking and planning, creating cooperative learning groups, designing station activities, assigning creative projects, and connecting art or music to subject-area content. Time is spent in computer labs for activities such as writing and peer editing, investigating problems and/or historical questions, building computer programs, designing movies and podcasts, etc. Teachers also report that they give one-on-one coaching to provide individual support and to determine individual strategies; additionally, they provide individualized feedback through comments on assessments, and through the Powerschool web-based grading platform, to help students address their own learning needs.

While Nashoba prides itself on providing superior instruction and curricula to high-achieving students, there is a growing perception among some members of the school community that the school has significant room for improvement in addressing the needs of “alternative” or “at-risk” students, a growing sector of the school population. While there are individual examples of staff instruction that model best practices around hands-on, project-based, personalized and differentiated learning in alternative environments, there is no formal, systemic process for discussing and developing common language and practices around alternative education at Nashoba. The principal has identified this as a critical need going forward, and has made exploring alternative programming one of his priorities for the upcoming school year, and beyond.

Results indicate that Nashoba's educators do an exceptional job of modifying and varying instruction to generally meet their students' needs. However, there is need for additional professional development and programming to address the needs of the alternative and "at risk" population at Nashoba.

Teachers, individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices by utilizing student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments, examining student work using feedback from a variety of sources, including students, other teachers, supervisors, and parents, examining current research, and engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice. 92% of teachers say that they examine a wide range of student work, common course assignments, and common grade-level assignments to make informed, data-based decisions. 73% of staff reported that they examine standardized student assessments such as MCAS, Advanced Placement, and SAT results as well as common mid-year and final exams to understand student achievement. Feedback from other sources such as competitions (computer programming, Math Team, Robotics, DECA), exchanges with other professionals, conferences, AP Institutes, and the College Board website also help inform instructional practice. Some staff have taken advantage of tools such as Mastery Manager to adjust their instructional practices and monitor student achievement. The launching of use of District Determined Measures (common assessments) for the coming school year will provide opportunities for school-wide assessment of data towards modifying instruction. Teachers use formative assessments to track ongoing student achievement throughout units of study and summative assessments to reflect upon practice and to tailor future instruction. Additionally, teachers modify their practice based on their examination of student work, students' feedback on course surveys, other teachers' suggestions, supervisors' commentary, input from parents, current research, and their engagement in professional discourse focused on instruction.

Some Nashoba teachers voluntarily participate in Professional Learning teams which give participants time to collaborate on different initiatives, including the development of common

course or grade-level assessments and analysis of MCAS results.

Formal time is limited for NRHS teachers to meet and collaborate in order to utilize student achievement data, examine student work, analyze feedback and current research, and engage in professional discourse focused on instructional practice. Though majorities of teachers report engaging in these activities individually, their participation in collaborative professional reflection and analysis is often on a limited, informal basis. More time needs to be dedicated for teachers' engagement with colleagues in these activities.

Teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practice. Teachers maintain expertise in their content area according to surveyed students, staff, and parents, who agreed with the sentiment at rates of 81%, 89%, and 83%, respectively, on the Endicott survey. How teachers accomplish this is revealed in a series of teacher responses to the TELL survey. Only 16% of teachers see district-offered professional development sessions as a means to deepen content knowledge, while 50% feel they need such professional development to teach more effectively. Regarding such professional development, only 6% of surveyed teachers view teachers as playing a role in determining content of in-service professional development, 32% believe the professional development is data driven, only 12% consider professional development to be differentiated to meet the needs of different teachers, and only 27% see the school leadership making a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about professional development.

The needs of teachers to deepen content knowledge and the absence of professional development that meets this need have led many teachers to maintain content area expertise individually. Teachers report taking traditional and online courses, reading academic journals, attending conferences, and joining professional organizations as ways of connecting to ongoing content-area support. On the TELL survey, 39% of teachers report spending more than ten hours in the past two years on professional development in their content area. That some of this time may be coming from outside the school day is suggested by another TELL survey response:

teachers report that time spent on school-related activities outside the regular school work day is more than five hours in an average week for 85% of teachers, with more than two-thirds of these teachers spending upwards of ten hours per week, although this time may not be specifically dedicated to professional development in the content areas.

The absence of meaningful, content-specific professional development provided by the district has led most NRHS teachers to seek needed professional development on their own time. More time should be set aside for teachers to collaborate on investigating new content as well as learning from the best practices of their colleagues. Teachers need to be given greater opportunities to engage in the planning of in-service professional development and be provided with more district-level support to engage in outside professional development activities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Students, parents, and staff report satisfaction in the quality and styles of instruction provided by Nashoba Regional High School. However, in varied forms of data collection, staff members repeatedly express discontent with the dearth of district-supported professional development designed to actually impact instruction at the high school level. When improving instruction is made an individual responsibility on top of teachers' day-to-day workload, it is not made a priority by many time-constrained teachers, regardless of their commitment to their profession and their students. Both the district and the high school leadership must acknowledge and respond to this perennial concern from high school teachers. In order to truly support students in learning 21st century skills, teachers must modify and revise instructional strategies and continue to develop their content knowledge -- and it is imperative that the district and school create time, resources, opportunities, and infrastructure to support teachers' independent and collaborative learning.

Based on the rating guide for the Standard, Nashoba Regional High School judges its

adherence as **ACCEPTABLE**.

STRENGTHS

- Collegiality and generosity between veteran and developing educators, including sharing of instructional materials and advice.
- Teachers who are dedicated to the practice of teaching and invested in the success and well-being of students
- Teachers seek out and implement new teaching ideas and strategies.

NEEDS

- The school (and district) must work together to address the disconnect between teachers' and students' perceptions and understandings of personalized instruction, with specific attention toward helping students truly understand and meet the school's learning expectations.
- More common planning time and meaningful, content specific professional development is needed in order to ensure that all teachers meet the needs of all students in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations and core values.
- Short- and long-term plans must be made to ensure that the Nashoba physical plant will be supportive of good instructional practice: computer labs and science lab space must be updated and increased; shared teacher space should be configured to promote collaboration and professional discourse; classroom space must be increased, etc.

Instruction committee:

Patricia Clark (Math)

Quintin Burks (English)

Maureen Dumais (Science)

Robert Griffith (Social Studies)

Renee Joyce (Special Education)

Jennifer Panarelli (English)

Linda Peer (Science)

Michael Poirier (Co-Chair - Social Studies)

Melissa Snediker (Co-Chair - Social Studies)

Charles Tinschert (Science)

Susan Triantafillou (Math)

Loretta Williams (English)

Standard 4 - Assessment Of and For Student Learning: Narrative

The professional staff does not continuously employ a formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. School-wide rubrics were developed in 2012, and since then, teachers have been expected to implement them on a regular basis (once a quarter). The rubric format and indicator language tie in directly to the school's 21st century learning expectations. Whether staff meet that expectation, or whether or not the use of rubrics aid the staff in formal evaluation of student progress, is as of yet undetermined. While there has been formal communication regarding use of school-wide rubrics, there is as of yet no formal process to ensure that all teachers are using them consistently.

Likewise, there has not been any process instituted to assess whole-school progress in achieving the school's learning expectations. Developing measurements to assess whole-school adherence to the learning expectations is expected to be a frequent topic for Nashoba's Leadership Council (administrative team and department heads) in the coming year.

A formal process based on the school-wide rubrics must be established to assess progress towards the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations both on a school wide and individual student level.

It is unclear whether, or how, the school's professional staff communicates individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to students and their families, and the school's progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to the school community. Through the use of PowerSchool, report card comments, e-mails to parents/guardians, and parent-teacher conferences, the school's professional staff

does a thorough job of communicating students' academic progress in specific courses.

Whether that communication connects to the school-wide learning expectations varies across staff members and departments. Professional teaching staff is expected to assess students on the 21st century learning expectations (using the staff-developed school-wide rubrics) at least once per quarter. As of yet, there is no formal means to assess whether that expectation is being met. The language of the school wide expectations is not integrated into any of the formal means by which student grades are reported, unless teachers themselves enter such language into the comments section. There is no evidence to suggest that occurs on a regular basis.

According to the Endicott survey, 83% of parent respondents felt that the school's learning expectations were referenced at parent/teacher conferences. When asked more directly whether they had received a formal report explaining their student's progress on the 21st century learning expectations, 53% of parents agreed that they had. That number is perhaps a reflection of parent confidence in Nashoba teachers rather than an accurate statement of fact, as no such formal report yet exists, outside of individual teach rubrics. Only 48% of staff reported that they use the school wide rubrics to assess student work.

While a vast majority of parents felt that they had been exposed to the school's learning expectations through parent/teacher conferences, a more formal and thorough process is necessary first for measuring the school's progress and then for increasing communication to all parents/guardians about the school's and about individual students' progress towards achieving the Nashoba's 21st century learning expectations.

Professional staff collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement. At Nashoba, the evidence that professional staff collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement is mixed. Based on the Endicott survey results, 41% of staff report agreement with this statement, 19.6% of staff report disagreement, and 39.1% are undecided as to whether this practice occurs.

In the Mass TELL survey of March 2014, 59% of staff reported that they need more professional development centered around closing the achievement gap.

When broken into its component parts on an internally-generated staff study delivered by the Assessment committee, this question revealed certain areas of strength. When asked if they collect and analyze data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement, 88% of the 78 responding teachers replied that they do. However, responses to an additional question on the internal survey shows that only 46% of teachers report analyzing classroom work and 35% report analyzing departmental midterms/finals. Finally, Endicott survey data show that only 58% of teachers meet within their departments or in professional learning communities to review student achievement data and develop responses to inequities in performance.

To increase the percentage of teachers engaging in assessment analysis activities, more time must be given for teachers to meet and analyze data in order to respond to inequities in student achievement.

Prior to each unit of study, approximately one-half of Nashoba's teachers routinely communicate to students the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed. Based on the Endicott study survey of 92 staff members, only 54% of staff reported that they are in agreement with this statement. Nashoba's internally-generated staff study data, collected from 78 teachers, indicates that 88% of responding teachers communicate their expectations and syllabus by handouts, verbally, and on their Google site. 93% agree that their course expectations document and syllabus include 21st century learning expectations.

Only 37% of teachers state that they have unit-specific learning goals on their Google site. Prior to each unit, only 49% of teachers communicate unit goals and expectations to students verbally, by handouts, and on their Google site. 57% of teachers state that they

communicate to students how they will assess units by showing rubrics to students prior to starting the units. 42% of teachers stated that their rubrics are posted online for student access.

As we move forward with the school's 21st century learning expectations, greater familiarity with and regular use of the school-wide rubrics is clearly an area that should be developed, implemented, and refined across all departments.

Prior to summative assessments, the majority of Nashoba's teachers provide students with the corresponding rubrics. Out of the 821 students surveyed at Nashoba Regional High School, 71% said that teachers provide them with rubrics to assess their work, with 77% saying that they understand the rubrics provided to them. As only 48% of staff cite using the school wide rubrics, the evidence suggests a wider use of individually developed rubrics across staff. In the internally-generated survey, 79% of staff responded that they did use rubrics frequently. According to the Endicott survey, 62% of parents believe they are familiar with and understand the school-wide rubrics that Nashoba's teachers provide prior to assessments. That number perhaps suggests a certain level of confidence in Nashoba's teaching staff, rather than an accurate familiarity with the actual school-wide rubrics.

As a result of having rubrics shared with them in advance of assessments, Nashoba students have a clearer understanding of what is expected of them and how the end result will be evaluated. Efforts to increase the frequency of use of rubrics are underway and may increase the percentage of teachers using rubrics, including school-wide rubrics, on assessments.

Within each unit of study, teachers employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments. Nashoba's internally-generated staff survey data, collected from 78 teachers, suggests that 97% of responding teachers use a variety of strategies to assess the abilities and knowledge retention of their students. Results from the Endicott survey of 92 staff members reveal that 91% of the staff agrees that teachers at Nashoba employ

a range of assessment strategies, including a variety of both formative and summative assessments in each unit of study. However, during the school's "mock NEASC visit" in Spring 2014, during which 50 classrooms were visited over the course of two days, formative assessments were observed in only 50% of classes. Many teachers utilize such formative assessments as "problems of the day" or "do now" exercises at the beginning of class, or "tickets to leave" at the end of class periods. Teachers also check for understanding (dipsticking) using clickers, whiteboards, thumbs-up/thumbs-down activities, as well as written quizzes. Students are also formatively assessed on a daily basis through observations in group and independent work. Teachers provide rubrics with the 21st century skills, along with exemplars, for assignments and projects. Summative assessments include tests, projects, papers, presentations, and portfolios.

77% of students who responded to the Endicott study perceived that teachers used a variety of methods to assess their learning. 66% believe that their teachers offer suggestions to help them improve their work. 65% believe their teachers' grading practices are fair and consistent.

[As a result of the wide range of formative and summative assessments, most students at NRHS have a variety of opportunities to demonstrate their mastery of 21st century skills.](#)

Less than the majority of Nashoba teachers routinely meet formally to discuss and improve both formative and summative assessment strategies. The limits of the current master schedule, exacerbated by the constraints of the school's limited classroom space, create the need to schedule teachers and classes into available rooms at available times, thus limiting flexibility for common planning time and for regular collaboration between teachers. According to the Endicott survey, 49% of responding teachers believe they meet formally to discuss the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments. In the separate, internally-generated staff survey, 55% of the 78 staff members responding report that they collaborate in formal ways with colleagues at least once a week.

27% of staff respondents indicate that they create formative, summative, and common assessments with their colleagues at least once a week. Of the staff members who took the internally-generated survey, 12% claim to analyze formative and summative assessments, including common assessments, with colleagues at least once a week. Finally, 17% of the responding teachers revise formative and summative assessments, including common assessments, with colleagues at least once a week.

The administrative team at NRHS has only recently instituted voluntary Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) for teacher groups to meet and regularly collaborate in subject areas.

Although this is a helpful first step, the times allotted for PLTs are not formally-designated time slots occupying a certain percentage of all teachers' total duties or obligations, but rather, are offered as substitutes for each volunteer teacher's other duty assignments. As a result, the PLT times are constrained by how often and when collaborating teachers share duty or free periods, consequently limiting fruitful, effective collaboration between teachers.

The results of the Endicott survey and the internally-generated staff survey clearly show there is a great need for improvement in the availability of -- and access to -- collaborative time allotted to Nashoba teachers to routinely meet in a formal setting to discuss and improve both formative and summative assessment strategies.

Teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure that students revise and improve their work. On the Endicott survey, 62% of students agreed that their teachers respond to their work in a timely manner. The survey also asked whether students were given suggestions to improve their work: 66% of students agreed they are given suggestions to improve their work. Finally, 65% of students believe that teachers are fair and consistent in their grading processes.

Teachers polled on the internally-generated staff study indicated that 87% return formative assessments to students within a week, 66% hand back summative assessments within a week, and an additional 19% hand their summative assessments back within 2 weeks. Finally,

when teachers were asked whether they afford students the opportunity to revise their work based on their feedback, 63% answered affirmatively, indicating that they allow students to do so on either all or a few summative assessments.

88% of teachers reported that they update PowerSchool with assessment data at least once a week or more.

The majority of teachers are providing students with specific, timely feedback on assessments. More emphasis should be given to ensuring that students use this feedback to revise and improve their work.

The majority of Nashoba's teachers routinely employ formative assessments to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning. During each unit of study, teachers routinely work with students to assess their progress and their understanding of concepts. According to the Endicott survey, 61% of students and 70% of parents believe Nashoba's teachers provide specific, timely and corrective feedback to students. 91% of staff indicate that they utilize a wide range of assessments, including formative and summative assessments.

In the internally-generated staff survey, more specific questions relating to assessment were completed by 78 staff members. Results indicated that 43% of staff use formative assessments on a weekly basis and 38% use them on a daily basis. Only 3% indicated they never use formative assessments in class. These formative assessments may be in the form of lab-based questions (5% of respondents), classroom activities (37%), informal question-and-answer sessions (9%), practice quizzes (19%), and Socratic questioning (7%). A sizable majority of the teachers who responded (82%) to the survey indicate that they review these assessments with students and utilize them to modify or improve their instruction.

As NRHS moves forward with its new school-wide expectations, increased, frequent and regular use of a variety of formative assessments should be used by all teachers.

Overall, teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice. This includes looking at student work, common course and common grade-level assessments, standardized assessments, and individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. According to the Endicott survey, 77% of the students, 69% of the staff, and 81% of the parents believe that Nashoba's teachers use a variety of methods to assess learning. 22% of the 92 staff members who took the survey are undecided as to whether "Teachers and administrators examine a variety and range of student work, common course assessments, common grade level assessments, and standardized assessments to revise and improve curriculum and instructional practices." There are a number of reasons for this discrepancy, and perhaps one has to do with the phrasing of the question on the survey: many teachers are unwilling to agree that administrators examine and assess student work, common course assessments, etc., and therefore believe it would be inaccurate to agree with the statement.

When teachers were asked in the internally-generated survey about their individual practice, the question was phrased differently: "Do you, individually and/or collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice, including any of the following: student work, common course assignments, common grade level assignments, individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations, and standardized assessments?"

Results of this internal survey found that 92% of teachers agreed that they examine a wide range of student work, 80% examine a wide range of common course assignments, and 76% examine a range of common grade-level assignments. 73% of staff examine standardized student assessments to chart student achievement. Further, while 76% of the staff tracks individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations, only 48% agree that they investigate school-wide progress in achieving those goals. Anecdotal evidence obtained through teacher interviews suggests the vast majority of the work done

looking at assessment evidence is done individually and informally, with little formal structure or time built into the master schedule and annual calendar to carry out such activities.

Although the vast majority of teachers are using evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practices, this is limited to a departmental/course level and is not widely implemented at the school-wide level. Again, lack of time to collaborate on a school-wide basis must be addressed if this goal is to be met.

Grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. Initially, data from the Endicott Survey suggested that less than half of the staff feels that grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. According to the Endicott survey, to which 92 staff members responded, 37% of staff report they agree that "school-wide grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised," while another 37% were undecided. On the same survey, 82% of parents who responded believe that grading and reporting practices are aligned with the school's core values and beliefs about learning.

The committee was puzzled by the Endicott survey results on this question. The committee realized that the survey question could be interpreted as asking about teachers' practice or about an overall school-wide practice, which made the results difficult to interpret. In an attempt to clarify the responses to this question, the committee asked, on the internally-generated staff survey, a similar question but rephrased it and divided it into two parts. One part asked whether teachers "regularly plan, review, and revise assessments based on student accommodation plans, IEPs, and 504s" and the other asked whether teachers "regularly plan, review, and revise assessments based on the general population." In response to this question, 83% of staff responded that they review and revise grading and reporting practices based on the needs of student accommodation plans, IEPs, and 504s, while 86% agreed that they regularly review and revise assessments based on the needs of the general population.

While many teachers report regularly reviewing and revising grading and reporting practices to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning, both parents' and teachers' perceptions indicate that the whole-school systemic incorporation of -- and communication about -- the school's learning expectations are still in their infancy. A more formal process for collaborative review and revision of assessment practices, as well as common time to engage in these activities, is required.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In general, Nashoba teachers provide timely and useful information to students about assessments. Not only are formative assessments widely used across the school, but students, parents, and teachers believe that the data provided by these assessments positively impacts student learning. Similarly, students at Nashoba usually have a strong understanding of the assessment rubrics (and thus, a teacher's expectations) prior to most summative assessments. At present, there is not widespread use by teachers of the school-wide rubrics. However, the majority of students and parents believe that the feedback students receive on assessments of all types is constructive and useful.

On a less positive note, Nashoba falls short on professional collaboration around and learning from assessments. Opportunities for teachers to collectively review assessments and analyze assessment data to inform instruction are few and far between. While many teachers do this work independently using data from their own students, the clear benefits of studying larger collections of student work and discussing the implications for instruction are not realized currently at Nashoba.

Based on the rating guide for the Standard, Nashoba Regional High School judges its adherence as **DEFICIENT**.

STRENGTHS

- Staff members employ a variety of methods to communicate assessment data to students and parents.
- Teachers employ a diverse range of assessment strategies.
- Individual departments disaggregate standardized test data to inform instruction.

NEEDS

- Nashoba must develop a process by which to assess whole-school progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.
- Nashoba must generate greater staff buy-in and use of the school wide rubrics and formalize a process to assess and revise them regularly.
- Nashoba must build time into the calendar and master schedule to facilitate teachers' collaboration around assessment and disaggregation of assessment data.
- Nashoba must formalize a process for the regular review and revision of grading and reporting procedures for alignment with the school's learning expectations.
- Teachers need to increase the frequency and regularity of use of formative assessments.

Assessment committee:

Lida Armstrong (World Language)

Robert Austin (Business / Technology)

Maura Bailey (Co-Chair - English)

Connie Benjamin (Special Education)

David Emerson (Student Services)

Alfred Fordiani (Science)

David Form (Science)

Katherine Giannetti (Special Education)

Stephanie Haley (Science)

Andrew Leblanc (Business / Technology)

Laurie McDonald (Special Education)

Owen Murphy (Co-Chair - Science)

Jim Nosel (Special Education)

Paulette Potter (Special Education)

Nathan Prichard (World Language)

Julia Wild (Special Education)

Standard 5 - School Culture and Leadership: Narrative

* The Nashoba self-study, and this report, were completed prior to the fall 2014 changes to the School Culture and Leadership standard, particularly regarding the indicators that address heterogeneous course offerings and formal advisory programming. For reasons beyond those two indicators, Nashoba chose to refrain from a re-vote, and to retain the rating voted on in May of 2014. If the fall 2014 language changes had been instituted prior to Nashoba's self-study, the percentages in favor of the rating may have been lower. However, after consultation with members of the Steering and School Culture committees in the summer of 2014, it was deemed that a new rating was not warranted. Please feel free to ask the Steering Committee co-chairs for further clarification.

The Nashoba Regional High School community has worked to build a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all, but recent trends and changing perceptions about the school culture and climate are an area of concern. The Endicott survey showed that 68% percent of student respondents believe that teachers respect them. The numbers decline on questions that asked students about the respect level of their peers; only 57% of students feel that their peers show respect for teachers, and 54% feel that their peers show

respect for each other. The survey also showed that the majority of students do not feel bullying is an issue at Nashoba, as only 14.6 % responded that bullying is a concern. When asked whether students are proud of their school, 75% of students responded affirmatively. Also, 62% percent of students believe that teachers are concerned about student learning.

The school-wide rubrics, developed based on the school's core values and beliefs, are intended to provide guidelines that foster expectations for student learning and shape assessment of students' work. These rubrics reflect Nashoba Regional High School's dedication to creating an educational experience in which the entire school community facilitates a student-centered learning environment characterized by equity, personalization, collaboration, and engagement. The rubrics express the belief that learning is a collaborative process of continuing student growth and that all learners will become proficient by the time they graduate. Everyone in the school community--staff, students, parents, and community members--are agents of teaching and learning.

To further promote a positive learning environment, the school has designed and practiced a school safety plan. All staff, students, and emergency workers are aware of how the plan works in the case of an emergency. However, feelings and perceptions concerning the level of safety and positivity of the school culture and climate at Nashoba reflect a disturbing trend. While the Endicott survey results from the fall of 2013 showed that 84% of student respondents felt safe at school, an internally generated survey delivered in May of 2014 saw only 43% of student respondents report feeling safe at Nashoba. Similarly, Endicott results saw 97% of staff report that they felt Nashoba's "school culture is safe, positive, and supportive". A May 2014 survey saw that number drop to 38%. While no specific reasons were solicited when gathering these responses, anecdotal evidence from teacher interviews conducted during a "mock site visit" activity conducted in March of 2014, from feedback solicited by the School Culture committee's research in writing this report, and from the Mass TELL survey results of early spring 2014, indicated concerns about the growing number and severity of disciplinary incidents, perceptions that administrators and teachers were not consistently enforcing expectations for student

behavior, and a disturbing trend of “tribalism” developing among certain segments of the student body.

Because the entire Nashoba community has worked to build a safe, positive, and respectful environment, the majority of students feel that they are respected at school. However, more attention needs to focus both on identifying the reasons why a growing number of students and staff feel less safe while at school, and on implementing strategies to ensure that all stakeholders feel that they have a safe learning environment. Our school-wide rubrics and statement of core values and beliefs reflect Nashoba’s desire to foster an equitable, personalized, and engaging learning experience for all students. It is clear that the Nashoba community needs to do a better job to address the pattern of growing concerns about perceptions of safety and security to live up to those stated values.

* Nashoba Regional High School is equitable and inclusive, yet does not foster heterogeneity within the core classes. Even though 32% of the staff believe that the school requires every student, over the course of the high school experience, to enroll in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core course, the fact remains that no students at Nashoba enroll in heterogeneously grouped core courses. The school does offer students the opportunity to enroll in mixed-level courses (either college prep/accelerated or accelerated/honors) in English, Foreign Language, Science, and Social Studies. The school also offers a number of unlevleed courses in Fine Arts, Technology, Business, and Wellness. Though no students are enrolled in heterogeneously grouped core courses, nearly 100% of students are enrolled in mixed- or non-levleed courses. The Endicott survey showed that 71% of students believe they have had a “number of opportunities to take courses in which students of varying levels are enrolled.” All freshmen at Nashoba participate in an orientation program on the first day of school, and are enrolled in a year-long Study Skills curriculum. All sophomores participate in an unlevleed

Health course. All juniors participate in a semester long guidance seminar. As seniors, all students have the opportunity to participate in an exit interview process. Additionally, all students have access to general education inclusion courses, ranging from AP Psychology to Best Buddies Physical Education and Health. We also offer athletic programs at the freshmen, junior varsity and varsity levels, as well as intramurals each season, and two Unified Sports programs. In addition, a number of clubs, including a nationally-recognized Best Buddies program, award-winning programs in drama and music, as well as such organizations as Community Service Club, Gay-Straight Alliance, Student Council, CrossFit, and DECA, are available to all students. These programs are consistently evaluated to meet the needs of the student body.

Although we recognize there are opportunities to increase core course offerings that meet a standard of heterogeneity, many in the school community believe the varied opportunities students currently have to enroll in non-homogeneous courses fosters an equitable and inclusive environment.

* Nashoba Regional High School does not have a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the school (other than his/her school counselor) who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. Endicott survey results for all students (both general education students and those receiving special education services) show that only 31.9% of 9th graders were in total agreement with the statement "My school has a program (advisory, mentoring program) which provides me with an adult in the school, in addition to my guidance counselor, with whom I meet regularly and who knows me well." That said, there is a formal academic skills program for freshmen facilitated by an instructor who works directly with general education and special education personnel. For the majority of 9th grade students, this instructor acts as an adult advisor in the school who assists them in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations through the Freshman Study

Skills program. However, large section sizes make it difficult for this staff member to know each student well. Every special education student is also assigned a contact person who works personally with the student, his teachers, and his family to offer mentoring and support. However, special education liaisons and the Freshman Study Skill instructor are focused primarily on academics and are not advisers that students generally connect to beyond the realm of academics.

In addition, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students do not perceive a high level of support in the form of an advisory or mentoring program. Only 25.7% of 10th graders, 26.1% of 11th graders, and 24.1% of 12th graders were in total agreement with the same statement. From the number of students who were in total disagreement with this statement (9th graders: 29.1%, 10th graders: 43.7%, 11th graders: 52.2%, and 12th graders: 49.7%) it is clear that as students progress through their time at Nashoba, they have a decreasing perception of support from advisory or mentoring programs. Only 39% of parents who responded agreed to a similar survey statement.

Staff were asked if they “actively participate as an advisor/mentor in the school’s formal program to personalize each student’s educational experience.” Their responses are grouped as follows: 34.8% in agreement, 39.1% in disagreement, and 26.1% were undecided. These results may be ambiguous as staff may informally advise or mentor students but the school has no formal program for such interactions.

Although students do have some access to an adult in the school who knows them well and helps them achieve 21st century learning outcomes, they do not perceive this to be the case. Parents and staff had similar responses. The most comprehensive levels of support are available to students in the 9th grade and across all grade levels in special education programs. There is a need for a more formal, ongoing program such as an advisory or mentoring program to meet this need for all students.

In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and

professional staff engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning, and use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices. However, there is limited dedication of formal time to implement professional development, and apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Although staff reported that they engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching, and they use resources and dedicated formal time to implement professional development, staff has limited opportunities to do so. Common planning time is not formally incorporated into the master schedule for teachers and staff. However, some teachers and staff create common planning time on an informal and voluntary basis. Annually, a number of teachers facilitate and/or participate in yearly book groups to explore new, more effective means of teaching and meeting student needs. Staff can volunteer to attend professional development academies which are held in the spring and summer. Individual staff members regularly volunteer to engage in their own professional development via district Summer Academy offerings, high school professional book groups, after-school Tech Tuesdays hosted by the Business department, and voluntary common planning time.

According to TELL (2014), 84% of respondents said that they spend less than an hour of their time on professional development (PD) in a week. The remaining 16% of respondents reported that they spend less than 5 hours on their professional development in a week. In fact, 16% of respondents to this survey also indicated that the PD offered is not impactful, different content should be covered, and/or there is not enough time set aside for meaningful PD. Respondents reported that much of the district-provided professional development is not relevant and desired more opportunities to have unstructured time with colleagues to collaborate on specific work with students or to develop cross-departmental ideas. Another recurring theme in the responses was that professional development provided through district programs was not directly applicable to course content and it was necessary to find other avenues to enhance subject matter. Only 11% of responders felt positive about their professional development activity within the district.

NRHS staff engage in some professional discourse at faculty meetings once a month and during early release professional development activities provided by the district. Consultations and collaborations between general education, special education, guidance, and administration take place daily both formally (for example, in IEP meetings) and informally. In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff use resources outside of the school and apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment and to maintain currency with best practices. Teachers and staff are involved in many and varied trainings related to pedagogy and content, such as attending annual NEASC Model Programs events, outside conferences, staff participation in the NEASC process on other campuses, the RETELL course, and department-related trainings and conventions; some also complete graduate-level coursework in their academic fields. Administrators are also involved in outside professional development activities such as conferences on technology and innovation, workshops on blended learning and changes in the state discipline law, and participation in a two-day administrative retreat each summer with all district administrators. In addition, outside speakers have come in to present to the district leadership team. This district leadership team (composed of central office directors, as well as principals and assistant principals) meets monthly; district assistant principals have weekly Teaching and Learning meetings. The Mid-Wachusett district principals also meet approximately every two months.

Staff members make an effort to attend trainings off campus in their subject areas and in pedagogy. Staff work together to improve their skills through book groups, common planning time and other voluntary activities during and after school. However, staff feel the need for more time to interact with other colleagues in the building to share expertise. Staff feel the current professional development activities are geared towards state and district mandates and are not particularly helpful to the teaching they do every day. More formal time should be dedicated to meaningful professional development.

Nashoba Regional school leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision

processes that focus on improved student learning. The Nashoba Regional School District is in the process of revising its own evaluation system. All administrators and team leaders participated in a two-day training retreat this past summer conducted by an outside evaluation consultant. However, the challenges posed by the change in process are extensive, and developing familiarity with the Baseline Edge application (a web-based program that helps track and organize evaluation materials) is ongoing. An oft-repeated phrase that “we are building the plane as we fly it” reflects the fact that the learning curve continues. Administration has been meeting monthly for the last year to discuss best practices with the new evaluation tool. Administrators have held three information sessions for teachers in order to explain the new evaluation system, how to use Baseline Edge, and to help teachers develop their SMART (Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Realistic, and Time-based) goals. Teachers also attended a three-hour training session in August and an early-release professional development training session on SMART goals and Educator Evaluation in September.

Discussions are ongoing regarding building a larger role for department chairs in the supervision process. Currently, that role is limited to organizing departmental professional development sessions around constructing district-determined measures (common assessments). In the past, chairs have conducted informal classroom observations and offered feedback, but this has not been uniform across departments and occurred less in the past year than it had in years prior. A voluntary staff classroom observation program had produced meaningful conversations and sharing of best practices at faculty meetings, but that program has waned over the past few years and did not occur in 2013-2014. Nashoba’s mentoring program provides formal, regular feedback to teachers on non-professional status regarding supervision towards improving student learning.

By using the new teacher evaluation system, and by providing information and training sessions to explain the processes and help teachers develop goals for student achievement, Nashoba’s administrators are working towards helping teachers focus on improving student learning. Avenues to expand the supervision process, including larger roles for other school

leaders, such as department chairs, should be a priority going forward.

The organization of time provides limited support for research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students. The current schedule is a seven-period, eight-day full rotating schedule. Each period is 46 minutes in length except for the lunch block, which is the fifth period of the day. The lunch block is split into four 23-minute lunch sections plus two minutes of passing time between each section. During the lunch block, each class consists of three blocks of instruction, plus one lunch section assigned by the administration. The rotating schedule provides equal instruction time for all students. According to the TELL survey, 63% of the faculty feels there is sufficient instructional time to meet the needs of all students.

During the school year, the schedule changes occasionally to accommodate an activity period and/or an early release day or late start day. When an activity period is held, all classes are shortened by a few minutes to accommodate the activity period. This is the time for various activities to take place, such as class meetings where presentations are made (i.e., campaign speeches for election of class officers, class rings, graduation, etc.) or club/activities meet, such as the Green Team recycling club and Best Buddies, to name just a few. Meetings like these would not normally be feasible after school. Students not participating in these meetings have the opportunity to work collaboratively in their homerooms. This organization of time supports some of the learning needs of students.

In the past couple of years, teachers within a department have occasionally been relieved of their homeroom duty during an activity period so that they can work collaboratively. The task is usually curriculum driven. Although this time supports professional collaboration among teachers, there is the perception among staff that the time allotted is insufficient. The Endicott Survey reports that only 47.8% of teachers believe they have formal opportunities to collaboratively examine student work to improve their instructional practices.

On an early release day, usually four or five classes meet and dismissal is at 11:30. The

number of early release days has declined in the past few years due to complaints from parents that there were too many, and complaints from teachers that they were losing too much instruction time. In previous years, dedicated time for collaboration with teachers across the district in subject area groups (called job-alike groups) allowed teachers to focus on improving curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. Unfortunately these job-alike groups no longer take place at the high school. The limited number of professional development hours built into the district calendar, and the many and varied state and district demands on that time, have resulted in the de-prioritization of job-alike professional development for high school staff.

Late start days are used during midterm and final exam weeks. The purpose is to allow students the opportunity to sleep later and be better rested for exams. Research within the building has shown that the late start adjustment has not yielded a significant improvement in student performance on these exams. The two hours that teachers and staff have during an early-release afternoon or a late-start morning provide some time for professional collaboration. Some of this time has been used to enter curriculum into Atlas, a web-based curriculum mapping tool. However, in the past, there has been no structure in place that allows for consistent time to collaborate. Over the past year, early release time has been dominated by the self-study, and with training regarding the new evaluation tool and developing district-determined measures. Curricular work and formal collaborative time during early releases has significantly diminished.

During the current school year (2013-2014), Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) have been established. Twenty teachers are currently involved in these voluntary PLTs. Those involved are relieved of one campus study duty and officially meet once during an eight-day cycle. Results from the TELL survey indicated 86% of Nashoba teachers indicated time is not made available for them to collaborate with colleagues.

During campus study time, usually two teachers are assigned to supervise the area. Teachers who wish to supervise together are encouraged to request it. This is an informal time for teachers to work together to discuss the learning needs of their students. Some teachers have

made the effort to work together on curriculum when convenient, but most of this collaboration occurs within departments, among teachers who happen to have common planning time.

In the past, a small segment of the monthly staff meeting was dedicated to teachers teaching teachers. Teacher volunteers would share teaching practices and innovative methods used to improve student learning. Although this was a meaningful time to disseminate information, very little time was allotted to support research-based instruction, professional collaboration, and the learning needs of all students. In addition, this opportunity has not been a part of the 2013-2014 school year.

Teachers new to the building are assigned mentors via a district mentoring program. Every effort is made to pair the mentor and the mentee together with a common prep period so that they can collaborate on a variety of issues. Although the mentor program expects the mentor teacher to log a minimum of 30 hours of discussion time with the mentee, no official time is set for them to meet.

Although there are various informal opportunities for teachers to meet and collaborate, there is little to no formalized time set aside for such activities. Investigation of master schedule options, increased building and/or department-dedicated professional development time, job-alikes and professional learning teams should be increased in order to promote achievement of this indicator.

Student load and class size generally enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students in the majority of classes. While the overall average class size for Nashoba is reasonable, there are areas where the class size is not conducive to individualized learning. Specifically, many staff would like to see a lower class cap on College Preparatory leveled courses to facilitate more personalized instruction and better meet the needs of those students. Significant efforts, such as efforts to build in extra capacity and make the CP sections disproportionately smaller. These efforts are made by guidance and the administration in order to accommodate the addition of students who enter the school at mid-year or some other

non-standard time, and when students shift levels during the year. While this is the intent, the reality of scheduling and staffing does not always permit such considerations.

The plan to add staff for the 2014-2015 school year will add a small ameliorative effect on class sizes, but until a policy is made to keep the College Preparatory classes to a smaller size, class size will continue to be an important issue for a significant number of students and teachers.

The principal, working with other building leaders, provides limited instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. At present, building leadership provides minimal instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The current administrative team is viewed as having the capacity and intention to provide strong instructional leadership; however student and building management needs dominate administrators' priorities. Veteran Nashoba faculty recall a time when there was significant instructional leadership at the administrative level. Many faculty members were involved with after-school learning activities led by an administrator (i.e. Book Groups, Teaching Initiatives, etc.) in order to improve their craft and enrich their teaching. While current administration has shown an interest and inclination to further these efforts, no such opportunities have materialized with the exception of a teacher-led book group. The Principal supported the creation of many Professional Learning Teams. At the outset, the principal's involvement was direct but as building management needs intensified, his direct oversight lessened. A principal-driven initiative to expand cross-curricular instruction has provided teachers with the venue to develop new curricula (and course offerings) and assume informal instructional leadership. While, in general, teachers believe they are held to a high professional standard for delivering instruction and are recognized for their accomplishments, many do not believe the faculty and leadership have a shared vision or that the school leadership consistently supports them. Two areas where this lack of a shared vision is evident are in the reported lack of relevant professional development and in concerns about managing student

conduct.

Despite a 40% growth in student population, and a 6% decline in the student dropout rate, over the past dozen years, there has been no addition to the high school administrative team. The Department Chair position as it currently exists is primarily a department facilitator and a communication arm of the administration. There are examples of department chairs (particularly the English chair) providing significant instructional leadership, through the development of new interdisciplinary classes, cross-curricular units and lessons, and the reworking of departmental curricula and development and implementation of common assessments. However, the involvement and participation in steps like these are not uniform across the department chair position. Both administration and faculty recognize that a Department Chair position which could drive decisions at both the department and the school level would require institutional authority beyond that which is currently in the job description and collectively bargained agreement. Expansion of the administrative team and/or strengthening of the Department Chair position would create the opportunity for improved instructional leadership.

With true accountability and management stopping at the administrator level, a myriad of small faculty responsibilities are allowed to slide. Building leadership is so focused on managing students and the daily issues of a public school that there is not sufficient management of -- nor development of -- faculty, resulting in low staff accountability. The cumulative “slippage” of responsibilities directly affects the daily operations and culture of the building, as well as student outcomes. In particular, student-to-student respect, student-to-teacher respect, and overall faculty outlook are all negatively impacted; this has been especially true in the 2013-2014 school year. Faculty negativity is clearly evident in the TELL survey data: 68% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree that the faculty and school leadership have a shared vision, and 66% disagree or strongly disagree that the school administrators consistently support teachers. 82% disagree or strongly disagree that the faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems, suggesting that the negativity among staff impacts their

ability to work together in service of the school.

The concentration of management responsibility for a relatively large faculty and staff, and growing student body, does not facilitate opportunities for effective instructional leadership. The principal is limited in the extent to which he is able to work with other building leaders to provide instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. Developing formal roles for department chairs, and expanding informal opportunities for other teacher-leaders, to offer instructional leadership should be a goal.

Parents and students are involved in meaningful decision-making with defined roles that promote responsibility and ownership; however, teachers are not consistently put in the same meaningful decision-making roles. Although 68% of teachers answered in the Endicott survey that parents, teachers, and students are involved with defined roles in meaningful decision-making that promotes responsibility and ownership, the question merged three very different groups together, making the result difficult to interpret. To better differentiate between parents', teachers', and students' decision-making roles, the School Culture committee conducted interviews with a random cross-section of the faculty to determine the validity of the survey's data. In addition, a follow-up internally generated survey was used to poll the staff about the following question: "In the decision making process at the high school, how much input do you believe teachers have been given?" 75% of the staff answered that teachers' input was either non-existent or minimal at best, with 1% reporting that they had a great deal of input. After reviewing the data between the two surveys, the committee determined that there was a discrepancy in the findings. When the question specifically focused on the teachers' decision-making roles, the results differed greatly. Although the majority of the staff felt that they did not play a strong role in the decision-making process, they did have a voice within the Master Schedule Committee and in recommending students for future classes. While a "Faculty Senate" was established 8 years ago, a group that served as a council in support of the building administrative team for only a couple of years, it was then later redesigned into the NRHS "Sunshine Committee", charged with boosting staff morale and spirit. Some staff have felt this

change removed a significant vehicle for teachers to express concerns and address issues.

Some anecdotal findings also point to instances in which a significant number of teachers felt their voices were not heard or welcomed. Specifically, teachers expressed the need to have clear roles in decisions about professional development topics and initiatives. Additionally, interviews with staff revealed a shared perception that despite participation on district committees such as the Bring Your Own Device/Technology in the Classroom committee, the Professional Development committee, and the School Calendar committee, results and final decisions from those district committees seem to disregard high school staff members' input.

A number of examples highlight parent involvement with defined decision-making roles. Parents are involved with the Athletic Booster Club, the district School Committee, the high school School Council, the NRHS Scholarship Committee, and the district Special Education Parent Advisory Committee (SPED PAC). Parents also participate in essential roles within the IEP process, and independently operate the Friends of Drama and Music committees, as well as the NRHS Endowment Fund. In addition to parent involvement, students have opportunities to participate in defined roles that promote responsibility and ownership. Students involved in the Student Council and Student Government, the many student clubs and organizations (Best Buddies, Green Team, DECA, etc), and the Student Advisory Council all have an official voice within the school community.

Although significant majorities of parents and students have expressed the feeling that they possessed meaningful and defined roles in the decision-making processes at the high school, there is a need for more formalized opportunities for teachers to have the same. There is also need to further examine student perceptions on this issue, beyond one self-study survey question.

Teachers at Nashoba Regional High School are given limited opportunities within the district's schedule to exercise initiative and leadership; often, dedicated time is dictated by the needs of the district, not necessarily by the needs of the faculty and students at the high school. Although some teachers work within a Professional Learning Team during school hours, the

majority of teachers work outside of school hours, exercising the initiative and leadership essential to improving the school and increasing students' engagement in learning. The PLTs were developed in order to make up for the lack of time within the district's schedule for building-based professional development, particularly staff members' needs for collaborating on assessment, developing curriculum, and improving instructional practices. Time for teachers to demonstrate leadership and initiative in collaborative professional work is essential to good educational practice, and currently, such time is rare at NRHS.

For example, more than 30 student clubs and organizations were active at Nashoba during the 2013-2014 school year. Both student- and teacher-initiated, these organizations are collaborative opportunities for students and staff members to engage in enrichment, exploration, and challenges beyond the limits of the academic schedule. Most of these organizations are led by passionate teachers who inspire students to get involved, pursue their interests, and show school spirit. For example, DECA students and the NRHS Business teacher spend more than 10 hours a month running the school store, an experience through which students learn the responsibilities of running a business. Yearbook club members and their advisor work collaboratively online late into the night in the weeks approaching their deadlines. Best Buddies student leaders and their advisor organize numerous whole-school events and dedicate lots of after-school time to activities together.

Additionally, teachers take on special interest projects in efforts to address various needs in the school. In the fall of 2013, a small group of teachers organized a school-wide Lip Dub to generate extra school spirit. This was a huge undertaking, as it involved the entire school community and required countless hours of preparation and organization. Students were engaged in the process from beginning to end and took leadership roles when it came to filming and editing. In the spring of 2014, a group of NRHS teachers started the Substance Abuse Task Force to examine the problem of substance abuse in the student community. The task force is planning events and programs for the 2014-2015 school year. In the 2013 Endicott Survey, when students were asked if they were proud of their school, 74.9% of the student body were in total

agreement. This is 19.4% higher than the aggregate data.

Other teacher-initiated and led groups exist as well. For seven years, Nashoba graduation has included a Chieftain Speech; this concept came from the desire of a group of teachers to have a speech-writing competition into which any senior--not just those with the highest GPAs--could enter. One senior speech reflecting on the "Chieftain experience" is now a feature of graduation each year. In the 2013-2014 school year, after the departure of an assistant principal who used to lead a faculty book discussion group, a teacher took on the role of facilitating this group in order to retain a tradition among some staff members of discussing pedagogy and practice in an after-school setting.

As a direct result of teachers taking it upon themselves to exercise initiative and leadership, students at Nashoba not only have significant opportunities to enhance their engagement in learning, but also have teachers who are committed not only to professional reflection and improving their practice but also to the overall development of their students. More time should be built into the school day to encourage teachers to exercise initiative and take on leadership roles.

There are differing opinions as to whether the school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. Based on reports gathered from these three groups it would seem that there is a plan in place to be collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving Nashoba's 21st century learning expectations. These groups meet regularly and agendas include topics related to school improvement and school governance. Responses from these three parties to questions about this indicator suggest that the three work in close collaboration. The high school's principal (who started in 2012-2013) feels he has considerable input when working with the superintendent on items related to the school's learning expectations. At a July 2013 conference, building and district administrators also attended a training organized by Allen November on 21st century learning expectations.

Frequent communication occurs between the superintendent and all district principals at monthly meetings, which the current principal describes as collaborative discussions about topics. They also meet on a summer retreat to discuss pertinent issues. Principals report out to the School Committee on a fairly regular basis. As indicated by the Endicott survey results, the faculty is concerned about the collaborative nature of these three parties (54% of respondents disagreed with or claimed to be undecided about the statement that “the School Committee, Superintendent, and Principal collaborate in the process of achieving the learning expectations”). However, the current high school principal believes he has significant input in defining and executing the school’s 21st century learning expectations. An exit interview with an interim principal, who served from 2011-2012, raised questions in regards to the effective collaboration between principal, superintendent, and School Committee. In that interview, he expressed concerns that there was not sufficient autonomy of building-based management, particularly citing hiring / staffing issues. This was one among several issues he cited, describing his belief that in regards to collaboration between the high school and district leaders, there was often a disconnect between words and actions.

[Expanded avenues for communication across the stakeholders of the Nashoba community would assist in promoting a more universal feeling of a shared collaborative, reflective, and constructive process for achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.](#)

The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school. The School Committee believes that all principals in the district are responsible for the instructional programs at their respective schools, and the policies are clear that principals have decision-making authority for these programs, as expressed in an interview with the School Committee chair. It is in this area that many in the high school have some perceived discrepancies. While the school board, superintendent, and principal seem to respond that the principal has sufficient decision-making authority, surveys results and the exit interview completed by the interim principal of 2011-2012 would call that assumption into question. The faculty, for the most part, believes that the district model for decision making is

top-down. While the principal feels that he has significant authority and autonomy in high school decision making, there is the perception among a significant number of staff that the superintendent makes many decisions for the high school. For example, situations have occurred in which committees formed to hire teachers put forth candidates they believed were best for the job, but these candidates were not the persons selected for the job by the superintendent. Many teachers have expressed reluctance to serve on district committees such as the Professional Development committee and the Scheduling committee, a shared perception being that committee members invest time forming opinions and making recommendations in the best interests of the school, yet their points of view are not used in the superintendent's final decision.

Endicott survey results reported that only 28% of staff agree that the superintendent and the school board provide the principal with sufficient autonomy, with 35% disagreeing and 37% undecided. The interim principal's exit survey echoes some staff members' frustrations: he did not feel he had the opportunity to do the work he believed was needed at the school because the superintendent overrode many of his suggestions. The high school Leadership Council, composed of department heads, has opportunities to express its opinions to the principal; however, some department heads perceive that their input and their ability to effect change are both limited.

Perspectives differ about whether the school committee and the superintendent of schools give the high school principal significant decision-making authority to lead the school. Better communication between the principal and staff regarding school-wide decisions and more opportunities for staff to have meaningful involvement in the decision-making process would help to relieve staff members' hesitancy to participate in school or district-wide initiatives and would give staff a greater sense that their work is valued.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The culture of Nashoba Regional High School currently faces significant challenges. While students largely perceive that they are respected by the staff, many staff members perceive

that decisions made by the district leadership do not reflect respect for the professionalism and dedication of the high school staff.

While they take pride in the school, there appear to be growing student concerns about feelings of security and safety. While students believe that their access to course opportunities is equitable, heterogeneity in core courses is not an option at Nashoba. Many students don't believe they have ready access to an adult in the building who can advise and support them, even though many adults in the building serve informally in this role. Clearly, NRHS must communicate more clearly to students about the efforts made -- and the opportunities offered -- to create a safe and helpful learning environment for them.

Staff members are most frustrated by the lack of time provided for collaborative, thoughtful work with colleagues to improve teaching and learning in the school, as well as the lack of opportunities provided for teacher leadership among the staff. While almost all staff participate in the school- and district-offered professional development activities, most find these to be inadequate (in content, depth, time) to support true professional development. To sustain a dedicated and invested teaching staff, district leadership must provide support for teachers' thoughtful academic and pedagogic development. Likewise, there is a pervasive feeling that the high school principal must be given the freedom to cultivate teacher leadership within the building.

In essence, while the language of the school's core values indicates the school's commitment to integrity, communication, and respect, survey and anecdotal data suggest that the culture of NRHS does not yet live up to these ideals.

Based on the rating guide for the Standard, Nashoba Regional High School judges its adherence as **DEFICIENT**.

STRENGTHS:

- The large majority of Nashoba students express pride in their school.

- The NRHS school-wide rubrics reflect a student-centered learning environment.
- Nashoba offers elective courses, clubs, and athletics that are open to all students.
- Baseline Edge has brought a greater degree of organization and uniformity to the teacher evaluation process.
- Parents and students have decision-making roles within various clubs and committees.
- Teachers are involved in the research of new master schedule options.
- Teachers are involved in designing new curriculum.
- PLTs were formed during the 2013-2014 school year.
- Committed and enthusiastic teachers motivate more students to get involved in school activities.

NEEDS

- Continue efforts to provide students with a safe and supportive learning environment.
- Develop a formal, ongoing program such as an advisory or mentoring program to meet the support needs of students in all grades.
- Dedicate more formal PD time for staff to interact with each other in the building to share expertise and practical strategies for increasing student achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.
- Increase opportunities for staff to have meaningful input and decision-making roles in the development of PD activities to meet individual building or department needs.
- Provide time for participants in the mentor program to meet on a regular basis.
- Continue efforts to maintain small class sizes, especially at the College Prep level.
- Schedule common planning time to allow teachers to collaborate on instruction and assessment to improve student learning.
- Improve communication between district administration, high school administration, and faculty.

School Culture and Leadership committee:

Stavros Andreopoulos (Business / Technology)

Susan Bigelow (Special Education)

Jacque Carter (Co-Chair - English)

Timothy Castner (Social Studies)

Ross Cormier (Math)

Stephen Cullinane (Social Studies)

Michael Davies (Special Education)

Melissa Foley-Procko (English)

Parry Graham (Administration)

Stephen Kendall (English)

Linda Offt (Business / Technology)

Tom O'Toole (Fine / Performing Arts)

Kathleen Powers (Special Education)

Charles Schoolcraft (Special Education)

Trevor Short (Guidance)

Jodi Specht (Co-Chair - Guidance)

Standard 6 - School Resources for Learning: Narrative

Nashoba Regional High School (NRHS) has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, that support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. While the 21st century learning expectations are relatively new, the programs and strategies to support every NRHS student's achievement of school-wide learning goals are not new. These include counseling and advisory opportunities, academic support programs, special education programs, and safety resources.

Every student, upon entry to Nashoba, is assigned to a school guidance counselor. In addition, students have access to social/emotional counseling, career counseling, a full-time school psychologist, and two school adjustment counselors. One of the school adjustment counselors has a caseload of 40-45 students she sees regularly, which does not include those she sees through crisis intervention.

All freshmen are placed in a study skills program that helps with their transition to high school; however, section sizes sometimes make this program unwieldy. NRHS has an Academic Support Center (ASC) where students can be matched with a peer tutor as well as learn skills needed for academic success. This program has been reduced from a large classroom staffed by two Unit A staff members to a smaller space within the Media Center staffed by one Unit C staff member. NRHS also offers an English Language Learners (ELL) program to provide students with opportunities to achieve academic success.

A Life Skills and Transitions program works with students with moderate to severe disabilities, focusing specifically on life skills and vocational training. The Transitions students are placed at a variety of outside worksites for their vocational training. Two special education teachers and twelve paraprofessionals staff these two programs. In addition, in Nashoba's three Learning Center programs, special education professionals support and co-teach with regular education staff in an inclusion setting. Students in these programs are assigned to a particular study skills learning center to address their IEP goals. Collectively, the learning centers are staffed by six teachers, seven aides, and the two above-mentioned school adjustment counselors. These special education teachers also serve as contacts between parents, students, general education teachers and administrators. One of these centers serves as a therapeutic learning center, offering students with significant emotional or therapeutic needs a therapeutic learning environment with a fluid level of inclusion. Other resources available within the special education department include two part-time, board-certified behavior analysts, a full time speech and language pathologist, a part-time occupational therapist, and a part-time physical therapist.

A violence prevention team, consisting of two part-time School Resource Officers, assures a safe school environment. These School Resource Officers split the 20 part-time hours on three days each week. Thirty-six staff members are trained in CALM de-escalation techniques. On its website, NRHS also provides students with an anonymous portal to report incidents of bullying.

Every two weeks, the administrative team meets with Guidance staff, special education staff, and nurses to coordinate responses for individual students and to adjust intervention strategies. In addition, Nashoba uses an in-house detention system with shared staffing to offer students an alternative to outside suspension, as well as to provide at-risk students with an alternative learning setting.

In response to the relatively new school-wide learning expectations and to the growing student body, Nashoba's staff and programs must be diligent in reaching out to all students, identifying their varied needs, and addressing those needs in timely and consistent ways.

Nashoba provides consistent, comprehensive and accurate information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services. Parents and families are well informed about the various support systems offered at the school. Communication includes, but is not limited to, weekly principal phone calls and email, a high school newsletter, the high school and district websites (high school, Guidance, special education), the Nashoba student handbook, teacher syllabi, and parent/teacher committees (such as the Orientation committee, the Special Education Parents' Advisory Council (SPED PAC), and the School/Community Council). Nashoba holds an Open House for parents early in the school year and a Special Education fair in the spring. Nashoba also provides a variety of different support systems including, but not limited to the Academic Support Center (ASC), aid for English Language Learners (ELL), Response To Intervention/Student Teacher Assistance Team (RTI)/STAT assistance for students in need, and the SPED PAC, which meets monthly. All parents have the opportunity to access PowerSchool to track their child's progress.

School community survey data shows that families and students feel that they have access to information on student support services. 82% of parents either “strongly agree” or “agree” that “there is clear two-way communication” and 79% agree that they know what is going on at the school. 69.3% of parents and 61% of students either “strongly agree” or “agree” that “the school provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services.”

Guidance counselors regularly call parents of students regarding individual student issues that arise. They also attend IEP and other parent/teacher meetings to ensure that information about support services is communicated. Other communication from NRHS Guidance services includes regular and frequent updating of the Guidance page on the school’s website, use of the school’s weekly email message to send reminders of upcoming parent seminars, deadlines, and community events (orientations, junior and senior college planning, special education fair, 8th grade transition, and college essay writing presentation). Parent seminars are held to provide grade-specific information and resources for social/emotional and transition issues, the 8th-to 9th grade transition and scheduling, post-graduation planning, and college applications.

In support of students experiencing academic difficulty, the school provides information to families about available services. For students identified with learning disabilities that impede their ability to make effective progress academically, qualified instructors of special education offer individualized tutoring and collaborate with teachers to develop accommodations that allow students to achieve success. Special education teachers and aides update parents through yearly team meetings and quarterly progress reports, and facilitate communication as necessary between the regular education teachers and home. Furthermore, the Student Teacher Assistance Team (comprised of members of administration, Guidance, and Special Education, as well as the school nurse and the Academic Support Center director) meets weekly to discuss students who are having identified difficulty in school and to make any referrals deemed necessary.

The Academic Support Center is a place where students with or without IEPs can go for

support in their academic pursuit. The ASC offers instruction in organizational and study skills in all subject areas, as well as introductions between student learners and peer tutors. It is a quiet place to focus and study, to make up a missed test, or to obtain project materials. The ASC director is in constant contact with academic instructors, guidance counselors, administrators, students, and their families through email and phone.

For students with moderate to severe special needs, the school sustains a Best Buddies program, which reaches out to these students and their families to make the school experience more satisfying. NRHS has also implemented a unified sports program for street hockey and track that combines special needs students with typical peers.

For students who are not native English speakers and who are determined to be limited English proficient, the school district provides an ESL instructor. She works with English language learners (ELLs) directly and communicates directly with parents on individual issues through progress reports and emails. Every student in the district completes a home language survey to determine his/her need for ESL support; students determined to need that support work directly with the ESL teacher on a regular basis determined by the student's needs.

The school nurse's office provides confidential consultation, emergency treatment, and case management during school hours. Collaboration with families, health care providers, faculty, and the school community allow the nurse to maximize each student's learning experiences. Information on health issues (including athletic eligibility requirements) is communicated to families via mailings, individual consultation, website postings, and weekly email announcements.

As a result of the diversity of Nashoba parents in ethnicity, technological awareness, and overall school involvement, the school must maintain consistent and diverse means of providing information to parents and guardians. Nashoba needs to be aware of changes in technology, but it must also make sure that all parents have a chance to review and understand the available student

support services.

Support services staff use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student. The district has established guidelines and an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) to support the use of technology. Nashoba support services staff (guidance, nursing, special education, library/media, ELL) use technology and a variety of tools to deliver a wide range of coordinated services for students. However, technology services are not always determined by the needs in the building, but rather, are coordinated at the district level. Decisions regarding the school's technology needs are often hindered by the fact that the school and district have moved from building-based decision-making to central office decision-making. The administrative staff uses Connect Ed software to coordinate phone calls and emails home, as well as Pick-A-Time software to schedule parent-teacher conference times. Google Drive is currently used for collaborative work between staff members, between students, and between teachers and students, and frequent updates are made to the high school website to make parents aware of school news.

The Guidance department uses PowerSchool to track student progress, build the school's master schedule, and notify teachers of 504 plans and special alerts (medical, discipline, guardian, IEP, and RTI). Staff members take attendance and manage their gradebooks in PowerSchool to allow students and parents to track progress within each class.

The Special Education department uses E-Sped software to generate IEPs, and Guidance uses this software to articulate 504 plans. Most classrooms in the building contain wireless projectors for instructional use; the Special Education department also has speaking assistive technology. Nashoba staff uses a variety of Web-based tools, such as Google Apps and Google Sites, to support student instruction. The district has implemented an iPad program to support students using special education services; the devices and apps have been configured to support the needs of each student. High school staff members also have access to SMARTboards in some classrooms and computer labs. The Nurses use Health Office software to maintain student records.

The NRHS Library/Media Center uses a variety of technology support tools to deliver services. Destiny (Follett Library Services) is used for circulation and cataloging services such as cataloging both print and non-print items and equipment so they can be borrowed by students or staff, as well as keeping track of where more expensive electronic items are in the building. Destiny is automatically updated by PowerSchool to add new student information. Google Docs and Google Spreadsheet are used extensively for many purposes. Library documents such as lists of vendors, applications for library study hall, subscription and password information, and much more are stored on Google Drive and shared among library personnel. Google Forms is being used to develop pre- and post-assessments for student learning in the area of information literacy. Last year, programming students developed a Google-based program (Google Developer) for staff to reserve computer spaces, library spaces, Chromebook carts, and various pieces of equipment. The students created the database using Google Scripts; the program is being refined this year using input from staff. The library also loans out e-readers (Nooks), Google Chromebooks, Audible Accounts, document cameras, headsets, microphones, projectors, speakers, televisions, as well as smaller video cameras, still cameras and MP3 players/recorders for use in classrooms as needed. Nooks, in particular, have allowed the library to extend its collection by accessing and downloading books that are available in the public domain. In addition, the Media Center website is accessible for students and staff both from home and from school. Students and staff can access the library catalog, subscription databases, and resource lists for specific class projects.

Staff and students are provided with training and orientation to support the effective use of library and mobile technology via district Summer Academy workshops, district professional development, 9th-grade and new-student orientation, and individual as-needed training provided by both ITS and library staff.

Because of the wide range of technological resources used within NRHS, technology makes a significant impact on all content areas to support the curriculum. Nashoba staff use a variety of instructional technology and modes of delivery to support the school's academic

[mission and curriculum.](#)

School counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who deliver a written, developmental program and meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling. NRHS school counseling personnel deliver a written, developmental curriculum that meets the Massachusetts School Counselors Association (MASCA) standards and provides a program of academic, career, and college counseling. Five guidance counselors serve the 1037 students at Nashoba Regional High School. Each counselor has a student load, spread across the four grade levels, of between 200 and 250 students. Via the Guidance department, NRHS has an organized program to help with freshman transition and development. In the spring before 9th grade begins, one administrator and the guidance counselors give presentations to the rising 9th graders, overviewing the course of studies. Administration sends home information about the course registration timeline and leveling, as well as a calendar of freshman transition activities. Then, 8th graders register for classes with the assistance of a high school counselor in computer labs in the middle schools. In the spring, the administration holds an 8th-grade parent open house, introducing the high school academic program, with representation from Guidance, academic departments, and extra-curricular activities. In June, one guidance counselor and the school adjustment counselor meet with each of the three 8th-grade guidance counselors to review the list of at-risk students, insuring that the school is aware of potential transition issues. One high school guidance counselor is primarily responsible for the grade 8-9 transition period. This counselor is accessible for any regular transition issues and also attends all IEP and 504 transition meetings that are deemed necessary. In the fall, Guidance coordinates an Activities Fair to allow freshmen to discover the various extracurricular activities NRHS offers to assure an easier transition to the high school culture. Freshmen also complete a Learning Styles Inventory through Naviance with guidance from school counselors. A study skills instructional assistant uses the information from this survey to meet one-on-one with each freshman for introductory meetings and course planning, as needed.

Guidance counselors offer sophomores a four-lesson curriculum on early college planning and career exploration and meet one-on-one for course assistance. Sophomore students utilize two career assessments completed through Naviance. As a culminating event to the Sophomore Guidance Curriculum, every March the career counselor coordinates a “Reality Fair” in conjunction with the local Rotary Club. The Reality Fair is a hands-on experience to help students understand how education and career choices impact financial planning. A career counselor meets every two weeks with sophomores who need assistance working to their potential. Their work together includes goal setting, values clarification, and problem solving. Sophomore health classes do a suicide screening process with Guidance follow up.

Counseling services for the junior class include college planning in conjunction with a November Massachusetts Public College Fair. The process continues in January with a panel of college admissions representatives. Juniors also participate in a five-lesson “Guidance Seminar” in which counselors use Naviance to help students focus on post-graduation needs (testing process, college recommendations, etc). This continues in March with a presentation by a college Dean who stresses the importance of the essay in the college admissions process. As reinforcement, guidance counselors visit English classrooms in the spring to work on sample college admissions essays. Counselors also meet with students one-on-one for course planning, graduation requirements, post-graduation planning, and other topics as needed.

Senior students attend the Guidance department-hosted Massachusetts Public College Fair, and two Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority programs: Financial Aid and After the Acceptance (to compare financial aid letters). In their first quarter, seniors attend Guidance seminars to work on post-graduation planning and applications. They also meet with their counselors one-on-one for post-graduation planning, recommendations, and any other topics as needed. In January, NRHS alumni return to speak with the senior class about their first semester college experiences. Five or more times a year, community colleges and some state colleges host “Decision Days” to assist students in the application process. In the Spring, counselors host the Accuplacer, the placement test for public and community colleges. In the past, Guidance hosted

a two-year technical college fair. In 2013, students attended the fair at Hudson High School. Special Education students also had the opportunity to attend college fairs at both Mount Wachusett Community College and Fitchburg State University. Nashoba is also a testing site for the ASVAB for students interested in pursuing military careers.

Guidance mails home to each senior a detailed list of what a student must complete in order to meet graduation requirements. Administration reviews attendance quarterly for seniors and meets with students and counselors if attendance problems seem likely to impact graduation. Administration also creates “attendance contracts” for students with high absenteeism to earn back lost credits by having low/no absences in the current year. Senior Projects may be approved for credit based upon student interests. Work can be done in or out of school, and an adult mentor is assigned. Such projects are appropriate for both high-achieving and at-risk students with supports apportioned as needed.

Nashoba guidance counselors offer a wide variety of scholarship opportunities. Over 100 students receive more than \$75,000 in aid. Some of these scholarships are given to high academic achievers, while others go to well-rounded students or students who have specific interests, and still others are given to underperforming students who show a drive to continue their education or training. Nashoba Regional High School serves as a testing site for the AFL/CIO award. Counselors coordinate the Princeton Humanities Symposium, the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory internship, the Pirozzolo Fellowship, and the Bridges to Maui Program.

Every other year, the Career Counselor in the Guidance department organizes a school-wide Career Day in which approximately 125 professionals offer over 40 workshops in a variety of professions. Each student attends 3 workshops of his/her choice. On the alternate years, the Career Counselor coordinates four to six Career Spotlights during which 3-4 professionals from high-demand fields come to speak with students during an activity period. Past career fields include: engineering, business, healthcare, fine arts, athletic training, and

education. Additional career exploration opportunities have included a Bristol Myers Squibb job shadow day when students were paired with a BMS employee for a morning; the DigiGirlz program which invites girls to for a day to learn about careers; and a chiropractor team presentation for Anatomy and Physiology classes. Every other year a Learning Disabilities College Fair is held which hosts 20-25 schools who are known to have strong student support services. Guidance sends all students who are on IEPs or 504s a booklet on post-graduation planning and college options for students who have learning differences. Funded by the Guidance department, the senior class special education liaison attended a full-day professional development conference on “College Transitions” for special education students.

For students who will not receive a diploma their senior year and who will not return to Nashoba for a fifth year, Guidance provides counseling on the online learning and community college opportunities available to them. These students are considered “dual enrollment” seniors. However, dual enrollment is not just limited to at-risk students; high achieving students can also participate in a dual enrollment program. Additionally, every January the career counselor reaches out to students (through mail) who have not yet graduated or earned a GED. The career counselor also works with the Transitions teacher to help develop students’ job skills. Companies with which Transitions students have worked include Bolton Orchards, Clinton Hospital, Bose, WHEAT (501c-3), the Strand Theater, Leominster Crossings, and Legacy Publishing. For the rare student who is motivated to earn his/her high school diploma, but, despite a variety of interventions, isn’t meeting expectations, the opportunity exists to participate in the Alternative Learning Experience. Typically, this student also has financial difficulties that impact the family. Using the Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan, a student’s work situation can be counted as part of the student’s school day and credits. Guidance counselors remain at NRHS after the school year closes to assist students who fail a class in finding appropriate summer school classes and/or adjusting course selections for the following year.

For students with high-end Asperger’s and other social deficit disorders, the school adjustment counselor and the speech and language pathologist run the Social Skills Group.

Nashoba also offers enrollment to at-risk students from the Robert F. Kennedy (RFK) Lancaster School. One guidance counselor is assigned to these students (there are 11 during the 2013-2014 school year) and she attends a bi-weekly meeting at the RFK school.

All members of the Guidance department are also involved in the referral of students to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers. Three years ago, the Nashoba Guidance department engaged in outreach to mental health services in the surrounding three towns and gathered contact and procedural data. Counselors provide and recommend that information to families of students identified as in need of services or if parents request the information. Guidance also reaches out to the families and counselors of students already in therapy outside of school in order to get approval to share and discuss information. In addition, NRHS has developed a contract with a third-party counseling organization who is able to provide onsite counseling at the parents' expense to students referred for this service.

As a result of the variety of programs offered by the Guidance department at Nashoba Regional High School, students have their academic, personal, career, and college needs fully met. However, survey results note that only 17.8% of students meet regularly with their counselors, and NRHS should address this discrepancy to ensure that a greater number of students utilize the services available to them.

The school's health services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who provide preventative health services and direct intervention services. NRHS has a nursing staff conducive to the needs of the students. Survey data reveals that 69.5% of students feel comfortable going to the nurses' office. Nashoba Regional High School has three certified registered nurses on staff: one full-time and two half-time positions. The nurses assist the district-based school nurse leader, school physician, school health advisory council and the administration in developing a school health program. They participate in the planning and implementation of goals established by the school nurse leader and district school nurses. The nurses conduct health screenings as directed by state statutes, enforce district policies, and

support administrative plans on such topics as attendance exclusion, readmission due to infection or contagious diseases, as well as non-compliance with immunization requirements.

Students are observed on a regular basis to assess and detect individual health needs, and direct nursing care is provided as needed to meet the needs of the students. First aid is administered in accordance with established procedures from recognized agencies such as the American Heart Association. Postural screening is provided to 9th graders, vision, hearing, and BMI screenings are provided for 10th graders, and individual healthcare plans are created for students when required. Training is also provided to the faculty regarding protocols for blood borne pathogens, seizure, EpiPen use, and choking. Health-focused presentations with guest speakers are provided as in-school field trips for the student body and have included such topics as drinking and driving (“Sean & Betsie”), dating violence (“Yellow Dress”), social responsibility (a visit from the District Attorney’s office), sexting, and others.

The nurses maintain up-to-date cumulative health records on all students and report any discrepancies. They utilize a program called “Health Office” to record student and staff visits; with the help of these records, they create 904 reports for the state. Every school year, the school health services provide teachers with information about their current students through the “Health Alerts” section of PowerSchool. Teachers find this information to be very useful, as it makes them aware of students who have ongoing health issues, including dangerous allergies or respiratory problems.

The nurses collaborate and report to school personnel, administration, physicians, and agencies to ensure consistent communication about and implementation of student health needs in a timely and appropriate manner. Additionally, the nurses provide parents with assessments of their child for dismissal due to injury, accidents, or illness, and provide medical paperwork to document activity restrictions, such as in cases of concussion. The nurses may visit student homes when necessary. The school newsletter includes a health section that provides information on different topics such as safe driving, the flu vaccine, prom safety, frostbite safety,

mandated screenings, cancer awareness, and melanoma awareness, to mention just a few. The nurses also participated in a panel discussion as part of a community outreach program about domestic violence. They are in close collaboration with the school adjustment counselors and social worker regarding mental health issues. They regularly make referrals to primary care physicians, mental health care providers, emergency rooms, and other health education and prevention resources.

Nashoba's health services have committed personnel that provide comprehensive and wide-ranging support and interventions to all the members of the NRHS community.

Library/media services are not completely integrated into curriculum and instructional practices and have a limited number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who are available to teach information literacy skills and other 21st century learning skills to NRHS students. A significant number of students feel that the NRHS Media Center meets their needs. 76.5% agree that it has the appropriate materials, 81.5% believe that it is available to them throughout the day, 79.7% believe that it provides a wide range of services, and 79.4% believe that it has a staff willing to help them. However, the Media Center staff would like to see the Center making more of an impact on curriculum school-wide. It has one full-time certified library media specialist, one full-time paraprofessional, and one part-time paraprofessional. The full-time paraprofessional has extra hours to allow for assisting high school staff with A/V problems. All three library staff members assist students and staff in finding resources for research projects in addition to helping with any technology problems in the library. The library staff is responsible for two computer labs, 16 computers in the reference area, and two carts of ChromeBooks which are available for use in classrooms.

Library/Media services are not used to implement curriculum in all curriculum areas. Teachers in some subject areas (primarily Social Studies and English) consult with the library staff before beginning research projects to determine which materials will be most useful for their students. The library media specialist participates on two committees dedicated to

freshman transition with the goal that information literacy will become a part of the freshman study curriculum. Since many of the library's resources are contained in online databases, resources for each research project have been linked to project pages on the library website. Available print resources are also listed on these pages. Library staff generally pull relevant print resources ahead of time for use on these projects so that they can be used in the library or in classrooms.

The library staff is also working on finding curriculum resources for several interdisciplinary classes currently in development. The library staff help with implementation of any of the school's curricula that involve research and information literacy skills, as well as instructing students in the use of databases, online citation and note-taking software, such as NoodleTools. In addition, library staff members work to ensure that the library has the best resources for supporting all areas of the curriculum, including literature. For instance, some classes in the English department assign students to read several works by the same author. The library staff uses the author list to make acquisitions of new books by those authors. The library staff has also been assisting the English department in building the world literature curriculum, finding contemporary short stories and poetry from different parts of the world.

A recent analysis of the Nashoba library's collection showed that the average age of books in the print collection is 16 years. The science and technology print resources range from 21 to 27 years, much too old to be useful. However, the library collection development in these areas is concentrating on electronic resources, such as databases, that are updated constantly.

The library is open for 45 minutes before the beginning of the school day and remains open after school until 4:30 P.M. Monday through Thursday. The library closes at 3:00 P.M. on Fridays. The library also is closed for certain periods or days when the area is used for testing. Computer labs and Chromebook carts are reserved by teachers using an online reservation module and are available throughout the school day.

Library study periods are available to all students except freshmen, who have a freshman

study block. During library studies, library staff members are available to assist students in locating resources, using technology, and also finding resources available from outside the library via interlibrary loans. The library is divided into spaces designated for collaborative/cooperative study, quiet study, and a small area with study carrels for silent study. Noise-cancelling headphones are also available for students who are easily distracted by noise. Unfortunately, the silent area is adjacent to a computer lab with room dividers rather than walls, so the study area is not silent when the lab is in use. Teachers may also book areas of the library or computer labs (as well as Chromebook carts) and request a librarian's help teaching a lesson on citation, database use, or other research skills.

The library print, video, and audio collections are catalogued using Follett Destiny CIRC/CAT software. Students and staff have access to the catalog at school and remotely and can reserve items using a login. All library computers have Microsoft Office Suite, Adobe Reader, and a variety of browsers. However, students are encouraged to use Google Chrome for accessing Google Drive where all students and staff have district accounts. Three computers also have the Adobe Creative Suite so that students who are taking graphics courses may continue their work in the library. The library collection also includes eight ChromeBooks which are individually circulated to students who need them during library study periods.

To date, the library lacks regular formal assessment for its services. New assessments are being added to help assess the relevancy of the collection and Follett Destiny software is used on a regular basis to look at circulation, both in and out of the library. The results of the Endicott survey are being analyzed and will aid in future decision-making regarding library services. A majority of parents, teachers and students feel that library services are adequate. However, since many 21st century learning expectations are not being addressed in the library program, it is clear that more communication is needed with all parties.

The support services for identified students, including special education students, Section 504 plan students, and English Language Learners (ELLs), have an adequate number of

certified/licensed personnel and support staff. At NRHS, two district staff members work with ELLs. Nashoba has been designated by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as a Cohort 2 school district, and as such, is supposed to have the required number of trained Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) teachers by August 2014. Teachers are currently enrolled in SEI endorsement courses. All core academic teachers with one or more ELL enrolled in their class are supposed to have the endorsement by 2016. A limited number of seats have been available in SEI endorsement courses due to the demand across the state, which has made it challenging for Nashoba teachers to take the course.

In addition, located within the district is the Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps residential program, which houses Department of Children and Families and/or court-involved students on a transient basis. Their stays at RFK can extend anywhere from three months to a year. Students from RFK enroll at Nashoba throughout the academic year, often coming in with significant gaps in their academic history, as well as multiple diagnoses, behavioral concerns, and/or academic plans (IEP and 504 plans). During the 2013-2014 school year there were 11 students from RFK at Nashoba.

Nashoba should continue to encourage its teachers to fulfill the SEI endorsement requirements. More inclusive opportunities should be provided for identified students in order to more effectively integrate them into the school community. A process for the review of relevant data regarding the implementation of programs to support the achievement of these students should be developed in order to ensure that all students have the opportunity to meet the school's 21st century learning expectations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Nashoba Regional High School has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students; provides sufficient counseling, health, and information services personnel; fully informs families, especially those most in need, about available student support services; provides a comprehensive range of counseling services to students; provides a full

range of comprehensive health services to students; and provides a wide range of materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum. There are an adequate number of personnel in school counseling, health/nursing services, library/media services, and special education programs; however, the growing population of NRHS indicates that staffing levels should be higher.

Counselors deliver a written, developmental program; meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling; engage in individual and group meetings with all students; and deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and mental health agencies and social service providers. Health personnel provide preventative health services and direct intervention services, use an appropriate referral process, and conduct ongoing student health assessments.

The Special Education department provides a variety of services to meet the needs of its students, and staffing levels are adequate for the needs of the population. ELL support services are working to meet the new state requirements for teacher certification in order to serve identified students. Library/media services are somewhat integrated into the curriculum, especially into English and Social Studies classes, and library/media personnel are responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning.

Based on the rating guide for the standard, Nashoba Regional High School judges its adherence as **ACCEPTABLE**.

STRENGTHS

- A valuable, frequently-updated, and highly communicative website
- Technology and resources that extend information from the library/media center to home
- The developmental Guidance program with a focus on regular, formal individual and group meeting time with important topics for every student in all grade levels

NEEDS

- Additional personnel, including nurses, media center professionals, IT/tech support professionals designated to the high school, social workers
- Alternative programming for students struggling to succeed in the traditional format
- More space to accommodate the ever-growing population of students
- A system to ensure consistent communication among all stakeholders for students in grades 9-12 for all support service programs, to ensure that these programs are regularly evaluated (both for successes and for areas needing improvement in intervention)
- A plan to ensure that library and technology resources are more fully integrated into learning for students in grades 9 through 12, especially with regard to the school's 21st century learning goal that students will be discerning, ethical and able users of information
- An advisory program that meets the needs of all students, not just those most in need or at risk
- Renewed emphasis on the use of Nashoba's Response to Intervention program (RTI) that identifies, communicates about, and follows up on the needs of at-risk students in a timely, coordinated manner, with staffing support

School Resources committee:

Sue Allaire (Guidance)

Harold Becker (World Language)

Gail Callahan (Media Center)

Jennifer Campbell (English)

Maria Davis (World Language)

John DiGennaro (Special Education)

Kristen Diggins (Special Education)

Sarah Dodd (Guidance)

Susan Farr (Library / Media)

Davis Ferrante (Special Education)

Jonathan French (Social Studies)

Michelle Fohlin (Chair - Social Studies)

Lori Grasso (Special Education)

Suzanne Jordan (Special Education)

Mary Marotta (Business / Technology)

Anne O'Hare (Special Education)

Kathleen Patenaude (Special Education)

Christine Winter (World Language)

Standard 7 - Community Resources for Learning: Narrative

The community provides dependable funding for a wide range of school programs and services, sufficient professional and support staff, ongoing professional development and curriculum revision, a range of technology support, sufficient equipment and sufficient instructional materials and supplies, as proposed by the district's governing body. The

superintendent, in association with the school committee, works at crafting a budget to support school programs and services that the voters of all three towns will accept. The district participates in a monthly tri-town meeting where representatives from each of the member towns' boards come together to understand the needs of each town and the district's schools. A preliminary budget is presented to the communities in late January; this presentation is followed with a day-long budget forum on the first Saturday in February. The School Committee votes on the final budget in March to allow the budget to be part of each town's annual town meeting. The town/school district partnership helps the residents better understand the needs of the schools.

As a result, the voters of Bolton, Lancaster, and Stow have approved the requested school district budgets at every annual town meeting (in May) for the past several years. The budget has increased in each of the last three years (FY12 +2.7%, FY13 +5.4%, FY14 +3.1%). Student athletics fees are used to offset the costs of athletics (coaches' salaries, transportation, officials' fees, etc.); facilities rental fees help to support the facilities budget; and student parking fees pay the costs of maintaining the school parking lots.

In May 2012, the towns' voters supported a bond issue of \$2.2 million to renovate the outdoor athletic facilities at the high school. This renovation included the installation of an artificial turf field to support football, soccer, field hockey, lacrosse, track and other sports; installation of a new track to support track and field and physical education classes; and will include the installation of a new concession stand featuring a public restroom facility.

Shortly afterward, the towns' voters turned down a proposal of \$8.0 million -- \$4.3 million to be funded by the towns and \$3.7 million (45.95%) to be funded by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) -- to renovate the science labs at the high school. The MSBA's agreement that the science labs were deficient allowed Nashoba to be admitted to this program. However, due to a variety of factors including the MSBA's short timeline and the unexpected timing of this opportunity shortly after the athletic field bond issue, the towns did not approve funding for the science lab renovation proposal. Subsequently, a high school Space Needs committee has been created to examine, among a variety of challenges, the alternatives available and their costs. The science laboratory conditions are detailed more completely under

indicator 5.

With its current staff, Nashoba is able to provide all core class offerings to students; however, not all electives listed in the published program of studies can be offered due to an insufficient number of teachers. For example, the science department has had to cut science electives and some lab sections each of the last three years in order to ensure coverage of all core classes. Some years, the mathematics department does not have sufficient staff to offer computer programming. Art class sections tend to fill up, resulting in the hiring of an additional teacher for the 2013-14 school year.

Ongoing professional development was held on seven half days and three full days during the 2013-14 school year and the same schedule is proposed for the 2014-15 calendar. Little time has been made available for curriculum revision over the past two years. A survey of staff members indicates the need to have more teacher-driven professional development time to collaborate and improve instructional techniques. Funding for high school professional development has decreased over the past four years (\$11614/FY10, \$11004/FY11, \$10760/FY12, \$8250/FY13).

Technology spending has been flat since a decrease in FY11 for the district (no breakdown for the high school is available). The total technology expenditures were \$1.42M in FY10, \$1.19M in FY11, \$1.20M in FY12, and \$1.20M in FY13. The amounts spent on computer hardware in the district were \$261K, \$301K, \$293K, and \$293K for FY10, 11, 12, and 13, respectively. The TELL survey reveals that many teachers are concerned about the availability of technology resources and network dependability. Outdated computer labs with the addition of two Chromebook carts do not sufficiently support a full range of student-centered activities that require classroom-based instruction using technology.

Results of the Endicott survey indicate that the majority of staff members believe that the community provides adequate funding for a wide range of programs and services (57% of staff members agree; 20% disagree), adequate funding for professional and support staff (50% agree; 22% disagree), and dependable funding for instructional materials, supplies and equipment (63% agree; 19% disagree). When staff members were asked about whether the community provides

adequate funding for a wide range of technology support, there was greater disagreement (42% agree; 33% disagree).

Although a voter-approved district budget has been passed for the past several years and has included increases for items like the much-needed renovations to the outdoor athletic facilities, the budget has not been developed to fund renovations to the high school building, increases to teaching staff, professional development, or updates to technology resources.

The school develops and plans programs to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant, and to keep the school clean on a daily basis. Requested information about the process to properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment was provided to the committee only after more than a half dozen requests were made over several months. The committee acquired more information about the funding of specific projects and maintenance personnel through the district budget and published five-year maintenance plan for the high school.

Nashoba Regional High School employs seven custodians to maintain the high school building's 128,077 square feet and its grounds. The staff consists of a day-shift crew (two custodians and one custodian supervisor) and a second-shift crew (four custodians). The day crew's responsibilities include cleaning the gyms, closets/storage areas, main office, nursing area, and kitchen, responding to all work orders, and maintaining the high school grounds. The night crew is responsible for cleaning all classrooms, locker rooms, bathrooms, corridors/hallways, and the cafeteria. Additional support for more extensive repairs comes from the District's Maintenance Department.

A five-year scheduled maintenance list of projects with requisite funding exists; however, a plan that details the schedule/program for cataloging and replacing equipment was not provided. The major projects planned for the high school for FY15 include: \$40,000 for baseball and softball field repairs and \$175,000 for roofing projects to repair the music suite and gym lobby roofs. Additional repairs include ongoing HVAC improvements, parking lot maintenance,

security camera upgrades, window upgrades, and installation of additional lockers and cafeteria seating.

The Endicott survey queried staff, students, and parents with several questions that address this indicator. The response rates for students and faculty/staff were near 90% while the response rate from the parents was far lower (181 responses from well over 800 families with students attending NRHS). Due to this low response rate, the parent responses may not be representative of the entire parent population but are informative as we compare them to student and faculty responses. All three groups perceive that “the school is clean and well-maintained” (77.2% of staff, 75.8% of students, and 92.4% of parents). The students feel that furniture and equipment, science labs, and computer labs are in good working condition (63.5% - 69.7%).

92.4% of parent respondents agreed that “the school develops and implements a plan to maintain and repair the facilities, plant, and equipment.” The plan may be in place, but the staff perceive that the implementation is often problematic. Only 35.9% of staff agree -- and 33.7% disagree -- that “needed repairs are completed in a timely manner.”

NRHS develops and plans programs to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and physical plant; however, repairs are not always made in a timely manner. The building itself is kept clean and is well-maintained through the efforts of the custodial staff. More strict adherence to the district’s five-year maintenance plan and a schedule for equipment replacement is needed.

The community funds and the school implements a long-range plan that addresses programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements on a limited basis. The school maintains a school improvement plan that is updated on an annual basis by the school council. The main goals of the 2013-14 school improvement plan are to: 1) identify and begin to implement programs and resources to support NRHS students that struggle academically and 2) develop a long term vision for instructional

technology implementation at the high school. The district maintains a five-year plan for repairs at the high school maintained by the district's Director of Facilities. This plan lists upcoming repairs but not a long-range vision for the school. In November 2013, the School Committee authorized a High School Space Needs Committee to investigate the current and future needs of the high school. At the time of writing this report, the Space Needs committee had met a couple of times and was in the preliminary phase of its work. In addition, the district maintains a five-year technology plan. The current 2010-2014 plan is being updated for the next five-year timeframe (2014-2019) and is managed by the district's Technology Manager. The district also provides projections for population growth within the district and publishes current attendance data by grade. Staffing decisions are made on a year-by-year basis; however, not all course options can be offered due to staffing levels. Space in the high school is at a premium due to an expanding student population (see indicator 5).

While a five-year technology plan is in place, the replacement of existing computer hardware has been insufficient: computer labs are dated with different versions of software and many teachers' laptops have not been replaced, despite the desired five-year replacement plan. Teachers have difficulty fully incorporating technology into instruction due to limited availability of technology resources. Two trial Chromebook carts were successfully tested but these carts are not enough to support demand. Student-centered classroom-based computers only exist within the Business/Technology department, while many other departments lack the technology tools to support the teaching of 21st century skills. Without Smartboards in the high school, teachers (especially in mathematics and science) have requested tablet computers to enhance their instruction at a lower cost than Smartboards, but their requests have been denied.

According to the Endicott survey, the staff perceives that the school lacks long-range planning. In response to the question "the school has a long range plan to address facilities, future programs, services, staffing levels, and capital improvements" only 21% of respondents agree, while 46% disagree.

[The school has a school improvement plan in place that is updated annually to address](#)

programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements. However, insufficient staffing levels to support course offerings, space limitations due to increasing enrollment, inadequate replacement of computer hardware and lagging updates to computer software -- as well as the absence of other technology tools -- all are negatively impacting the teaching of 21st century skills to NRHS students.

Building administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget; however, not all faculty members feel actively involved. The assistant superintendent sends out the budget templates in the late fall/early winter. The templates are for non-personnel budget requests, personnel requests, and stipend requests. The building principal discusses the budget timeline with the department heads at Leadership Council meetings and asks them to begin working within their departments to develop personnel and non-personnel requests. The building principal sends department heads a copy of the non-personnel budget template, which includes their budget numbers from the previous several years. Department heads send the building principal their non-personnel budget requests in the template, and then the building principal meets with the department heads individually to discuss. During those meetings, personnel requests are also discussed. The building principal puts together an overall school-based budget request based on the requests from department heads. For the most part, the budget requests from the building principal have reflected exactly what department heads requested.

The Endicott survey reveals a perception that the faculty is not actively involved in the budget process. The response to “I have input into the development of the school budget” was 24% in agreement and 47% in disagreement. Anecdotally, this response differs from department to department.

Building administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget, and although not all faculty members feel actively involved, there is input into the budget

requests by individual department heads. Department heads should give department members greater opportunity to express their budget requests during the budget development process.

The school site and plant does not adequately support the delivery of high quality school programs and services. A student body that has grown consistently over the past ten years has resulted in an overcrowded building with a population exceeding 1000 students. Classroom space is at a premium, with rooms filled to capacity nearly every period. In the 2013-2014 school year, classrooms were in use just over 92% of the time; forecasts for the 2014-2015 school year are for classroom usage to be even higher. As a result, the cafeteria and Media Center are the only locations left available for students with study periods. The open study environment in the cafeteria makes it impossible for teachers to identify which students are supposed to be in study and which are skipping class. The school must operate a four-lunch period due to limited cafeteria space and the size of the student population. While the official capacity of the cafeteria is approximately 400 students, once lunch tables and seating are set up, the space feels crowded by 250 students eating at one time.

In the 2013-2014 school year, 12 teachers were relegated daily to moving their classroom materials on carts from room to room, sometimes changing floors and navigating crowded hallways that have lockers on both sides. Teachers indicate that this lack of space challenges their ability to get to class on time, to establish daily routines and expectations for their students, and to activate and close classes effectively. As a result, their instruction is consistently and negatively impacted. The effect is also felt by classroom-based teachers, as they are unable to prepare activities in their classrooms when the rooms are in use by other teachers' classes, creating difficulty and inconvenience in teachers' preparation for class. On the TELL survey, only 28% of NRHS teachers agreed that they have adequate space to work productively.

The building is starting to show signs that it is nearly 50 years old. One portion of the school has single-pane windows, making those classrooms cold in the wintertime. These windows also lack screens, allowing insects to fly in during warmer months and causing concerns about bee allergies. Some teachers lose instructional time to send students to their

lockers to get jackets when their rooms are cold. Based on repair history and ongoing maintenance challenges, the roof appears to be reaching the end of its viable life expectancy and may need attention in the near future; this is part of the current maintenance plan. During extreme cold weather, water pipes in the building are prone to freezing and bursting. For example, during January 2014, a pipe burst in the consumer education lab, flooding that room and four math rooms and causing those rooms to be closed for a week. The consumer education lab continued to operate with three of its seven kitchens out of service. In December of 2013, the school experienced a water pump failure that forced the early dismissal of school for that day and the absence of safe drinking water for one week. One of the range hoods in the kitchen is prone to leaking.

The increased number of students creates a variety of space issues. The building does not have enough lockers for every student, which means that freshmen are required to double-up at lockers, creating a traffic jam in the freshman hallway between every class. The student and staff parking lots are at their maximum capacity. The size of the cafeteria relative to the student population forces the school to use a four-lunch-period schedule; even so, seating at all lunches is at or above capacity, with some students sitting on the floor. New seating was recently added which allows students more room at tables. On the TELL survey, only 30% of teachers agreed that the physical environment of classrooms in the school supports teaching and learning.

The average class size of Nashoba Regional High School, as of the 2013-2014 school year, is 19.4, according to the Guidance office, as compared with the state average of 18.2, according to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. During the 2013-14 school year, Nashoba had 311 overall class sections; in the core academic subjects of English, Foreign Language, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies, the class size averages were 17.33, 18.87, 21.37, 20.74, and 21.02 respectively. Average class sizes in elective subjects ranged from 16.78 in Music to 21.17 in Wellness. The average classroom size is approximately 800 square feet, while the MSBA recommends 850-950 square feet. With furniture for the largest number of students in each classroom, teachers have found it difficult to adequately arrange classrooms to be flexible and conducive for both independent and collaborative activities.

Classroom furniture for students can be uncomfortable and chairs with desks attached offer little flexibility for classroom set-up. More physical space for collaboration is required in many classrooms. Lighting is inadequate in many rooms, especially in interior rooms without windows.

The building contains six classrooms configured as desktop computer labs. Three of those classrooms are available for teacher sign-up and are in high demand. Teachers need to sign up well in advance to get access to these rooms. One of those rooms is not partitioned with a full wall, providing disturbances in the Media Center. The other three computer rooms are used exclusively for technology classes. In addition, two Chromebook carts have recently been put into service (starting during the 2012-13 school year) for classroom and Media Center use, but are in high demand as well. These carts are based in the Media Center, making it difficult for teachers to retrieve the carts and be back in their classrooms on time for instruction, especially in the 1960's wing of the school. The wireless network has not been dependable and negatively affects the use of teacher laptops and iCloud-based Chromebooks. There is a need for department-specific devices to support instruction in most subject areas. For example, science classes need computers to do scientific computing and build scientific models; math classes can personalize instruction and provide graphical tools to help students better understand key concepts. Teacher interview feedback indicates that there is not enough access to quality computer equipment to support the curriculum and 21st century skills. Only 63% of teacher respondents to the TELL survey agreed that they have sufficient access to instructional technology, and on the Endicott survey, just over 42% of staff surveyed indicated that "the community and the district's governing body provide adequate funding for a wide-range of technology support." On a positive note, students don't seem to perceive a significant problem in the technology available: 73% of those responding to the Endicott survey believe that the school's facility (including its science labs, computer labs, etc.) adequately support its programming.

Nashoba's science labs no longer meet current safety standards. In 2013, the MSBA designated the NRHS science laboratories as deficient and eligible for inclusion in the Science

Lab Initiative (which the towns' voters turned down). Many of the science laboratories lack the following safety equipment: dishwashers, UV goggle sanitizers, fume hoods, proper ventilation, fire blanket storage, as well as locked storage for chemicals (e.g. acids, bases, flammables). In the entire school, only one science lab contains a two-foot chemical fume hood which is too small to be of practical use. All current labs have exhaust fans that leak cold air in the winter due to an absence of weatherproofing. Data from interviews with science staff members indicates that students and teachers have had to wear hats, coats, and gloves periodically in the winter months because the heating system on the science hall has malfunctioned. The 2004 NRHS NEASC report also identified a number of the preceding deficiencies. Adding this equipment to Nashoba science labs would allow the science department to expand experimental offerings, save time, and ease preparation and clean up.

The current science laboratory facilities do not provide an environment conducive to learning. Several issues impede the flexibility of the science learning spaces. The current space configuration and the location of the casework (cabinetry upon which the laboratory benches are built) make it difficult for students and the teacher to move within and around the lab area. The recommended square footage for a class of 24 is 1440 square feet while all science classrooms at Nashoba are smaller. In some rooms, lighting is not sufficient to illuminate the work space. In other rooms, there is electrical wiring near water sources. Much of Nashoba's laboratory furniture is old and falling apart, requiring frequent maintenance. Moreover, the inconsistency of the heating/cooling system in the building causes issues when dealing with live specimens, as many specimens are temperature-sensitive. Overall, improving the layout and condition of classrooms would enable teachers to focus solely on student outcomes.

Additionally, Nashoba's art facilities have not been updated to support the number of students enrolled in visual arts classes. (Projections for 2014-2015 suggest that close to 500 students will be enrolled in various studio art classes.) Class sizes are limited by space, and even so there is not enough workspace to allow a full class to sit and use easels. The art classrooms are not ventilated, preventing the use of oils and other volatile items. Not all rooms have sinks available for cleanup and some lack sufficient numbers of sinks for cleanup. Only one supply

closet exists for three classrooms and only one of these classrooms has a ceiling projector. There is neither enough space to store student work nor enough wall space to display student work for critiquing. Only one kiln exists for seven ceramics classes, resulting in inadequate turnover of student work, and the school has no pugmill to efficiently recycle the large amount of clay used by students, resulting in waste of supplies and class working time.

Similarly, the consumer education lab is becoming dated. For a full class (seven kitchens), there is only one dishwasher. The hot water piped to the room is not dependable and runs out. Water pressure to Kitchen #2 drops, stopping the flow of water there while water leaks into the adjacent classroom. The room has no overhead projector. There is a need for locked cabinets to store items, including safety items. The refrigerator space and kitchen space are inadequate to support the number of students enrolled in consumer education: 80 students per semester take Foods classes, with class size capped at 16 students because of limited classroom space. Within the consumer education lab, there is no actual classroom space in which to conduct instructional activities. Students and teachers using an adjacent classroom must pass through the current consumer education instructional space in order to enter and exit the other classroom, resulting in recurring interruptions.

The NRHS athletic fields were renovated in 2012. This project, supported by town voters, created a new athletic field furnished with artificial turf that supports a wide range of programs, including football, soccer, field hockey, track and field, lacrosse, and other club and community activities. Five new tennis courts were also installed. The fields and tennis courts also support physical education classes. Nashoba's athletics facilities are used to host MIAA activities and support area youth programs. A new concession stand, which will include public restrooms, will be constructed shortly.

The remaining athletic facilities require some attention. The locker rooms are not ventilated, which is quite noticeable after any practice. Door locks to the locker room need to be replaced to increase security. The existing gymnasiums lack adequate storage space, as evidenced by the storage of volleyball equipment and mats in the corner of the gym. The gyms also lack adequate cooling for warmer weather periods.

The auditorium supports a wide range of activities, as well. Nashoba has a thriving arts program which utilizes the auditorium for plays and musicals as well as band and choir performances. The auditorium is also used for faculty meetings and graduating class meetings, as well as for town functions, such as local elections and town meetings. However, the auditorium's capacity of close to 625 seats is not large enough to allow the entire student body (forecast to be 1060 students in Fall 2014) to meet at one time. Only the larger gymnasium can accommodate a gathering of the entire student body, with tight seating on the bleachers.

The creation of a high school Space Needs Task Force was approved by the School Committee on October 22, 2013, and the task force was formed in November 2013. Their tentative work timeline was published to be the following: issue a progress report in June 2014; make recommendations to the School Committee on January 15, 2015; file potential budget requests in 2015-2016.

While steps are being taken in the right direction (i.e., the Space Needs Task Force), the district and its communities need to address the significant and numerous challenges posed by an aging physical plant and the long-term growth of Nashoba's student enrollment with a definitive, long-term building and/or renovation plan. Such a plan is necessary to end the continued and increased disruption these space challenges pose to Nashoba's ability to deliver high quality programs and services.

The school maintains documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. After more than one-half dozen requests for this information, the committee received documentation that Nashoba Regional High School's physical plant meets applicable laws and is in compliance with relevant regulations. In particular, the following documentation has been provided:

- Building inspection report (from the Town of Bolton)
- Fire alarm, fire extinguisher and fire sprinkler inspection

- Drinking water testing report
- Wastewater inspection report
- Smoke hoods and kitchen inspection report
- Elevator inspection
- Integrated pest management plan

NRHS has all the necessary documentation to verify that it is in full compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local fire, health, and safety regulations.

All professional staff actively engage parents and families as partners in each student's education and reach out specifically to those families who have been less connected with the school. Nashoba Regional High School is fortunate to have a community that actively engages in the education of its students. Staff make many outreach efforts to engage parents throughout the school year. Each year the school hosts an open house for incoming freshmen, a college breakfast for seniors, a college planning evening for juniors, a foreign language week for all foreign language students, a peer-tutoring program luncheon, and a spring-time 8th grade tour/transition night accompanied by a presentation from the principal. Communication with parents in the community is extensive via a school website, many teacher-designed course websites, teacher email availability, monthly web-based newsletters, and weekly update emails and phone calls from the principal. Parents and students can continually access grades online through PowerSchool to track student progress. Parents use an online scheduler to make appointments with teachers during the annual parent/teacher conference days. Teachers are available for additional conference times as needed throughout the year. Both students and parents are invited to attend these parent/teacher conferences as well as Individual Education Plan (IEP) and 504 meetings.

Parents are involved with site-based councils and district committees such as the School Community Council (SCC) and serve as representatives on the School Committee. Parents are also active on the Student Health Advisory Committee (SHAC), the Comprehensive Reporting

Committee (CRC) and the Calendar Committee. Parents are invited to be a part of the vision planning nights hosted by Superintendent Michael Wood as part of the school improvement plan.

Parents also operate student support groups such as the Athletic Booster Club, the Friends of Drama, the Friends of Music, and the Scholarship Foundation, all of which provide financial assistance and organizational support for Nashoba students involved in these activities. The NRHS Endowment Fund, another parent-run group, raises funds to help with classroom needs outside of the provided budget. There are additional parent support groups specifically for the Robotics Team and the Math Team.

Nashoba holds an annual college planning night, providing the opportunity for parents, students and staff to work together as a team to help students begin their college search. There is also a financial planning night to help parents understand the FAFSA application process as well as other potential sources of aid for college funding. Parents are invited to attend two annual awards nights which recognize seniors and underclassmen for their academic achievements; seniors' scholarships are awarded during the senior awards night, as well.

Nashoba has an active Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) partnership with the town of Bolton. Participating student EMTs respond to medical emergencies in the town of Bolton throughout the school week. Additionally, the Banking Program works with the business department to involve students in a formal training program in banking through Clinton Savings Bank.

Parents and community members are invited to attend various student performances, including several annual music concerts featuring both choral and instrumental groups (Concert Choir, Concert Band, Pops Choir, Jazz Ensemble, Women's Ensemble, and an a capella group). The fall play, the winter class plays competition, and the spring musical also provide the community with an opportunity to connect with Nashoba students involved in the theater arts. Students, parents, and community members are invited to attend an annual visual arts exhibition in the spring to observe and appreciate student art work.

Parents provide a great deal of support and involvement through Nashoba's athletic programming, not only through the Athletic Booster Club. Many staff members play active

leadership roles as coaches and sports team mentors.

Nashoba Regional High School professional staff actively endeavors to engage parents and families as partners in students' education via various outreach and communication efforts throughout the school year.

The school develops productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning. Parents and businesses in the surrounding communities have been a powerful resource for funding and supporting curriculum, sports, and extracurricular activities, as well as for providing numerous partnerships for vocational work. Examples of these partnerships include but are not limited to the following:

- The parent-run NRHS Friends of Drama supports the annual drama productions by managing advertising and ticket sales, soliciting donations from parents, selling program ads to local companies, and conducting other fundraisers. Parents are very active in providing the actors and actresses with costumes, scenery support, set construction, and hair and make-up design. Through their efforts, NRHS productions have been very professional and have received awards.
- The NRHS Friends of Music similarly supports young musicians at the school by soliciting funds through the Friends of the Arts ad campaign and parent donations. They assist both the choral and instrumental music programs at the high school by staffing the concerts, providing chaperones for musical auditions for the Central District competition and for festivals like that organized by the Massachusetts Instrumental & Choral Conductors Association (MICCA). Both the Friends of Music and the Friends of Drama also stock and staff the refreshment booth during performances.
- The Athletic Boosters provide support for all of the athletic programs at the school: varsity, junior varsity, freshman, and inter- and intramural sports. Through their efforts, scholarship funds have been raised and equipment provided, including stationary bicycles, a scoreboard, and the outdoor sound system. Parents take turns staffing the

concessions stand and also hold membership pledge drives and team fundraisers.

Recently, they hosted the Buy-a-Brick fundraiser that netted proceeds of about \$13,000 and allowed them to design an attractive walkway displaying the customized bricks. The Booster Club also maintains a wish list of items to target for future drives.

- Clinton Savings Bank maintains a branch office adjacent to the school cafeteria and employs students interested in banking as day-time tellers. It also supplies a real-life experience for the general student body because it is a functioning bank, and students learn real-life skills such as filling out deposit slips, using an ATM, and managing their own money. In 2013-2014, approximately 40 NRHS students were involved in the banking program, doing coursework with a CSB employee and working in the bank. Approximately 10-15 percent of staff members regularly use the in-school bank; a handful of students actively use their bank accounts at school, and many others use the bank for money management (getting change, etc.).
- Funding for the high school's DECA program for the last two years has come primarily from local businesses who sponsor the program. This year, 13 local businesses donated to Nashoba DECA: Clinton Savings Bank, Every Network, Massachusetts Gymnastics Center, J's Restaurant at Nashoba Winery, Intepros, Brown's Auto Salvage, Rota Springs Ice Cream, Whitney Brothers Oil Co., Triple Play Batting Cages, Eddie Mayou Plumbing and Heating, Aubuchon Hardware, Fulciniti's Market, and Dunkin Donuts. Students also write papers about these businesses as a part of their business projects, and business managers and owners willingly meet with the students to discuss their projects.

Additionally, in 2013-2014, the Nashoba Regional chapter of DECA had three different groups conduct their own community service projects to benefit local charities. One group planned and conducted a 5K road race to benefit the Greg Hill Foundation; another group organized a raffle and a bake sale to benefit NEADS (Dogs for Deaf and Disabled Veterans); and the last group sold candy-cane-grams and bracelets to benefit Convoy of Hope.

- In terms of higher education partnerships, the Accounting class has perennial articulation

agreements with Mount Wachusett Community College and Quinsigamond Community College for credit at their schools. Additionally, several nearby community colleges host Decision Days at Nashoba, allowing NRHS students to learn about and commit to attending these schools. Area higher education institutions send representatives for on-site college fairs annually. The NRHS Guidance department offers college application workshops in partnership with representatives from nearby four-year institutions, focusing specifically on the college admissions process and application essay writing. Accuplacer tests are also administered at Nashoba with help from area colleges and universities.

- The Nashoba Robotics team offers students a unique opportunity to explore their “inner geek” and further develop and apply skills and interests in science, technology, and mathematics. Donations from parents, community solicitations, and corporate sponsors fund the event registration, as well as the purchase of tools and parts for the robot, team t-shirts, and team lodging during the competition. The expenses are significant: materials needed cost in excess of \$6,000, and the costs to compete can reach \$10,000 to \$15,000. Corporate and community sponsorships each year allow this group to continue to excel.
- The EMT program at Nashoba is unique and is a joint effort of the Town of Bolton, the Bolton Ambulance (EMS) service, and the high school. The funding is shared between the town and the school district, with emergency response support from the ambulance squad. Instructors, equipment, and testing fees are budgeted through this funding. Bolton EMS supplies the ambulance, its contents, and other necessary emergency medical supplies, including training dummies, defibrillators, stair chairs, and more. In addition, they offer training and refresher courses on a regular basis so that the students can interact with the adult EMTs as well as learn and refresh their skills. The program has two levels: Year 1 students meet twice a week to prepare for taking the MA State EMT Course, and Years 2 and 3 students have class once a week to continue with professional development. Squad meetings with adult EMTs occur every other week.

- The NRHS Endowment Fund has provided the start-up costs for Robotics, the Math Team, the Nashoba News newspaper, and the Speech and Debate team. In addition, each year the Endowment Fund receives teacher grant requests and has supplied SmartBoards for three classrooms, a projector for the Foreign Language department, a greenhouse for use by Biology classes, dry erase whiteboards for math and science classes, graphing calculators for the Academic Support Center, graphic novels for the Media Center, pedometers for the Health and Wellness department, and more. It has also funded programs such as the Visual Body and has brought in authors and speakers for the English and Social Studies departments. The NRHS Endowment Fund is in existence completely at parents' initiative.
- The Nashoba Regional Scholarship Foundation (NRSF, but also called Dollars for Scholars) funds many scholarships for NRHS seniors. The NRSF consists of parent representatives from each of the three towns, faculty members, students, and community members. The NRSF is the region's steward for annual scholarships from area businesses and donations from the members of the Nashoba community. They hold annual phone-a-thons, and solicit donations from the community and local businesses through an annual brochure sent out to the towns. Last year, 19 scholarships of \$750 each were presented to deserving students. One Presidential Freedom Scholarship of \$1000 (\$500 from NRSF combined with \$500 from the Corporation for National and Community Service) was funded.
- The Transitions Program has numerous partnerships with local businesses which provide vocational internships so our students can have work training. The businesses work with the school to provide students in the program with jobs that meet their individual needs. These partnerships include: the Nashoba Regional School District office, Bolton, MA; Bose Corporation, Stow, MA; Center School, Stow, MA; Clinton Hospital, Clinton, MA; Leominster Crossings Assisted Living, Leominster, MA; WHEAT Community Services, Clinton, MA; Interoffice Mail, Bolton schools and NRHS, Bolton, MA; Bolton Orchards, Bolton, MA; Strand Theatre, Clinton, MA; Legacy Publishing, Clinton, MA; Slater's

Restaurant, Bolton, MA; and VERC Enterprises, Berlin, MA.

Other career-oriented programming that could not exist at NRHS without the community includes a number of opportunities made available to the general student population. Every two years, the Guidance office organizes a school-wide Career Day, at which an average of 120 area professionals speak with students in more than 40 workshops about various professions/careers. On alternating years, panels of three to four community professionals visit Nashoba during Activity Periods four or five times a year for Career Spotlights, sessions featuring a single category of professions (i.e., engineering, graphic design, etc.). In addition, several unique internship and fellowship opportunities are offered to students by individuals and organizations connected with the communities: the Pirozzolo Family annually awards a fellowship to one student working on an independent project with a teacher-advisor; community member Dr. Brian Lisse coordinates a medical mission trip using the Bridges to Malawi initiative to facilitate travel; a local researcher offers a summer internship opportunity for one student at the Harvard Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory; area Rotary clubs offer Nashoba students the opportunity to attend the Rotary Youth Leadership Conference; and each year the Lively family offers the John Lively Music Scholarship to a Nashoba student.

Many local businesses and parents have also supported the After-Prom Party and the Best Buddies Prom. Through their generous contributions, students have been provided with safe environments to celebrate and have the prom. The monetary and material contributions help provide food, decorations, entertainment, and in the case of the Best Buddies Prom, the venue, too. The following businesses were sources of support last year: Acton Medical Associates, Acton, MA; Avidia Bank, Bolton, MA; Family Dental, Bolton, MA; Family Medicine, Bolton, MA; House of Pizza, Bolton, MA; Bose Corporation, Stow, MA; Brothers Pizza, Hudson, MA; Classics Pizza, Bolton, MA; Shaws, Stow, MA; Country Cupboard, Bolton, MA; Dare Community Program, Bolton, MA; Dennis Murphy Insurance Agency, Bolton, MA; Dunn and Co., Clinton, MA; Essential Therapies Day Spa, Bolton, MA; Friends of Drama and Friends of Music, NRHS, Bolton, MA; Global Fitness, Stow, MA; Kimballs, Lancaster, MA; Fire Fighters

Association, Stow, MA; Lancaster Police, Lancaster, MA; Leominster Animal Hospital, Leominster, MA; Market Basket, Leominster, MA; McNally Funeral Home, Clinton, MA; Mr. Z's Pizza, Clinton, MA; P&S Pizza, Clinton, MA; Rituals Spa and Salon, Leominster, MA; Ron Bouchard's Auto Sales, Lancaster, MA; Nashoba Rotary Club, Bolton, MA; Shirley Police, Shirley, MA; Slaters Restaurant, Stow, MA; Smyles Frozen Yogurt, Hudson, MA; Stow Firefighter's Association, Stow, MA; Stow Police, Stow, MA; Target, Leominster, MA; The Hair Connection, Leominster, MA; Theodore Nelson, DDS, Lancaster, MA; The Portuguese Club, Hudson, MA; Turini's Diner, Clinton, MA; and Sunrise Boutique, Clinton, MA.

As a result of tremendous parental and community involvement and the partnerships from local businesses, all students at Nashoba Regional High School have benefited. The partnerships provide opportunities for students to take on more mature responsibilities and help them to prepare for their first phase of adulthood. Interactions between different generations and community groups benefit everyone concerned – both students and adult community members – giving students a chance to act and think outside of their adolescent world and helping adults to connect with the world of today's students. In addition, the community and business interactions have helped to stimulate positive attitudes toward the high school while also providing businesses with an opportunity for philanthropic work and gift-giving within their own community.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Nashoba Regional High School benefits greatly from the many types of support offered by the surrounding communities. Citizens of all three towns generally vote in favor of funding the essential needs of the high school, although additional funding for the physical plant and for teaching staff will very soon be necessary to accommodate the school's growing population. Currently, the building is well-maintained by on-site staff; however, a longer-term plan for the building's maintenance and improvement/enlargement appears to be absent.

While the high school annually updates its school improvement plan with the help of community members, many needs will become urgent necessities in the near future, including expansion of the building and of the teaching staff, as well as improvement of technology resources, in order to truly help students reach 21st century learning expectations.

In the meantime, Nashoba staff maintain varied types of outreach and communication to parents and community members. The widespread generosity and involvement of many parents and community members in the broad range of opportunities presented by the high school serve as evidence that the school's outreach efforts are both effective and appreciated.

Based on the rating guide for the Standard, Nashoba Regional High School judges its adherence as **LIMITED**.

STRENGTHS:

- Community support of the school budget (which requires official voter ratification by at least two of the three towns) has been consistent every year, providing sufficient materials and resources for instruction and learning.
- The majority of parents, staff members, and students consider the physical plant of the high school to be clean and well-maintained.
- Nashoba has strong community partnerships that directly support and impact students' learning and development.
- The school maintains effective communication with parents via PowerSchool, website and email, principal outreach, open houses, and parent/teacher conferences.
- Newly renovated athletic fields and tennis courts are used by the school and community.
- Community members participate in the annual update of the school improvement plan.
- The Superintendent has convened and is leading a High School Space Needs Task Force, which is working to address the space challenges faced by NRHS.

NEEDS

- The school and district must develop a short-term and long-term building improvement/ renovation plan that addresses the current facility's negative impact on teaching and learning.
- The school and district need to develop a technology infrastructure and hardware plan that supports the school's vision of 21st century learning.
- The school should build broader awareness among students and staff of the opportunities made available by the many community partnerships maintained by the school.

Community Resources committee:

Bree Betke (Fine/Performing Arts)

Peter Connery (Wellness)

Ann DeCristofaro (Mathematics)

Lisa Hamlin (Co-Chair - Student Services)

Rachel Krantz (Special Education)

Linda Oetman (Nurse)

Diane O'Neil (Co-Chair - Wellness)

Lynda Phillips (Special Education)

Mary Redford (Mathematics)

Tania Rich (Administration)

Migdalia Rivera (Nurse)

Pamela Sanders (Special Education)

Joya Smith (Fine/Performing Arts)

Rosemary Sullender (Nurse)

Michael Tollefson (Science)

Nashoba Regional High School: 2014-15

Statement of the School's Critical Strengths and Needs

Strengths

- A variety of instructional practices are used throughout the school
- Across departments there exists a rigorous curriculum that prepares students for post-secondary education
- There are many diverse curricular offerings, as evidenced by a wide range of courses
- There are strong partnerships in place with the community, such as the EMT program
- Nashoba offers a wide variety of elective courses, clubs, and athletics opportunities, which are open to all students and foster student responsibility for learning
- Teachers are actively involved in designing new curricula
- Teachers employ a diversified range of assessment strategies

Needs

- Develop a formal process for review/revision of core values/expectations/rubrics
- Ensure a high school master schedule and district schedule that provides meaningful and regular opportunities for collaboration around curriculum, assessment, instructional practices, and data analysis
- Ensure that all staff members experience meaningful and continuous professional development
- Develop more alternative pathways and educational opportunities for students who may not be on path to attend a traditional four-year college or university
- Incorporate additional academic and social programming, such as advisory programs and intervention programs, to ensure increased student success
- Ensure that all support service programs are regularly evaluated
- Develop a technology infrastructure and hardware plan that supports a vision of 21st century learning
- Develop a short-term and long-term building improvement/renovation plan that addresses the current facility's negative impact on teaching and learning
- Ensure collaborative, inclusive, and consistent decision-making processes between the high school and central office

- Develop more meaningful decision-making roles for teachers in various areas, such as professional development topics/initiatives, technology planning, etc.
- Formalize a process for regular review and revision of grading and reporting procedures for alignment with the school's learning expectations

Nashoba Regional High School: 2014-15

Two-Year and Five-Year Targeted Plans

Two-Year Targeted Plan

- Administrative and leadership teams develop a timeline and process for formal review/revision of core values/expectations/rubrics
- Implement a new high school master schedule that incorporates regular opportunities for collaboration around curriculum, assessment, instruction, and intervention
- Explore opportunities at the district level to create more regularly scheduled professional development opportunities for staff (e.g., late starts or early releases several times each month)
- Develop and pilot at least one alternative educational program for non-traditional students
- Develop and pilot a structured advisory program for at least one significant segment of the school population
- Work with central office to develop a compelling and realistic vision of enhanced technology use at the high school
- Review the current department head role and develop a human resource proposal to increase the decision-making authority of department heads
- Develop a long-range plan for building improvement/renovation
- Conduct a comprehensive review of the school's grading and reporting procedures for alignment with learning expectations

Five-Year Targeted Plan

- Conduct a formal review/revision of the school's core values, expectations, and rubrics
- Formally review new master schedule to ensure alignment with school and district priorities
- Review alternative educational program(s) for non-traditional students and revise or

- extend programs based on review
- Review and revise or extend advisory program
 - Implement revised department head structure
 - Implement long-range building improvement/renovation plan

Steering Committee members:

Christopher Berthiaume (Social Studies)

Daniel Berube (Business / Technology)

Brian Cote (Administration)

Maria Davis (World Language)

Jennifer d'Entremont (Social Studies)

Kim Earley (English)

Cheryl Gallagher (Co-Chair - Special Education)

Parry Graham (Administration)

Kerri-Ann O'Donnell (Administration)

Laura Pagington (Social Studies)

Ellin Richardson (Guidance)

Laura Rotondo (Mathematics)

Leo Sakellarion (Co-Chair - Social Studies)

Rhonda Yeats (Science)