

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

**Commission on Public Schools**



**Commission on Public Schools**

**Report of the Visiting Team for  
Massachusetts Academy of Mathematics and Science**

Worcester, MA

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# School and Community Summary

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## School and Community Summary

The Massachusetts Academy of Math and Science was established by the Massachusetts State Legislature in 1992, as a “school of excellence” for academically accelerated Massachusetts students in grades 11 and 12. The Academy is the product of a collaborative effort involving the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), and Massachusetts school districts and serves the needs of 100 students per year (50 students in each of the two grades).

The main facility of the Academy is located at 85 Prescott Street, in the Gateway Park area of Worcester, MA, the second largest city in Massachusetts (population: 184,500). The Academy is housed on the ground floor of a renovated, circa-1917 factory building. Offices and laboratories for WPI, as well as offices for medical and other professional services, occupy the upper floors of the building.

This Prescott Street facility is the primary location for instruction of the Academy's 11th grade students. The Academy's 12th grade students attend classes on WPI's main campus (a 10-minute walk away) as well as in WPI classrooms and laboratories located in adjacent Gateway Park buildings. A free shuttle service operates between the Academy and WPI's main campus.

The Massachusetts legislation (Bill #7061-9624) that established the Academy stipulates that the Academy make every effort to maintain gender equity in its recruitment and acceptance of students and dictates that no public school districts be assessed any costs for students to attend the Academy. The Academy operates as an autonomous school district that is not under the oversight of any local school board or school committee.

Acceptance as an Academy student is contingent upon an application process that includes submission of high school grade transcripts, standardized test scores, teacher recommendations, and a personal essays, as well as the completion of the Academy diagnostic tests. Applications are accepted from December to early March of students' sophomore year. Approximately 180 applicants from as many as 60 different Massachusetts communities typically apply to the Academy each year.

Even though the school is open to residents of the entire state, the majority of Academy students reside in Worcester County. Nevertheless, the enrollment for 2019-2020 includes students from the following non-Worcester County communities: Chelmsford, Foxboro, Hopkinton, Marlborough, North Chelmsford, Tyngsboro, Watertown, and Westford. Residents of the city of Worcester comprise only 9 percent of the Academy's student population for the 2019-2020 school year.

The population of Worcester County is 830,839 (as of 2018), with the following race/ethnicity breakdown: 86.8 percent White; 11 percent Hispanic; 5.6 percent African American; 4.9 percent Asian; 2.2 percent multi-racial. Of the adult population, 90 percent have completed high school or advanced beyond secondary school and 34.8 percent have completed bachelor's or higher-level degree programs. The median annual household income (as of 2018) is \$71,853, and the unemployment rate is 2.5 percent (as of November 2019).

The maximum size of the student body at the Academy is 100 students. Enrollment for 2019-2020 indicates a total of 98 students (50 in grade 11; 49 in grade 12), with 49 identifying as male, 49 identifying as female, and 1 identifying as non-binary. Race/ethnicity data indicate a student population that is approximately 37 percent White, 1 percent Hispanic, 3 percent African American, 53 percent Asian, and 5 percent multi-racial.

The 2019-2020 NEASC CPS survey reveals that 91.2 percent of Academy students live in a home where at least one adult has a four-year college degree or an advanced professional or graduate degree. The Academy has no current students who have been identified as needing English language, special education, 504, or Title 1 services.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) categorizes the Academy as

both a public high school and a public school district. Administratively, the director of the Academy serves as both the principal of the school and the superintendent of the district.

The teaching staff for the Academy's junior year students consists of six permanent full-time faculty members, one each in mathematics, physics, humanities, computer science, foreign languages, and one science, technical writing, and STEM teacher. The school has a teacher-to-student ratio of 1:8. The permanent teaching staff is augmented by a full-time guidance counselor and a visiting scholar (limited to a maximum two-year appointment) who assists in STEM and extra-curricular programs. The Academy posted for the visiting scholar position in 2020-2021 but decided to not fill the position because of the remote learning status and fiscal limitations of the budget.

Additional staffing for extra-curricular programs is provided by WPI faculty and outside instructors. A part-time nurse, a part-time professional development coordinator, and a full-time operations manager round out the rest of the professional staff at the Academy. In the fall of 2020, the professional development coordinator position was reduced, and a new position, a part-time mental wellness counselor was added.

The director, teaching staff, and guidance counselor engage in a faculty meeting weekly in order to discuss school planning and scheduling, deal with issues of concern regarding individual students, establish and evaluate school programs and policies, and otherwise plan, reflect upon, and evaluate the on-going activities at the Academy.

The Academy's senior year students are enrolled as full-time freshmen at WPI and attend classes taught by WPI professors on WPI's main campus. Seniors carry a full college freshman load of 12 courses, spread out over four academic terms. Academy seniors are required to take four courses in humanities (two of which must be writing or literature classes), four courses in mathematics, and four courses in science (which also includes engineering and computer science).

All seniors check in to the Academy every day that they have classes. They also meet regularly with the Academy's guidance counselor who assists with their college application process and provides other counseling services. All seniors are also assigned to designated faculty advisors at the Academy, who meet with them on a weekly basis throughout the school year in order to monitor their academic progress, their required community service obligations, and senior independent study projects, as well as provide appropriate assistance and advice.

Up until 2020-2021, for organizational and advisory purposes, the Academy's juniors have been divided into four homerooms of 12 to 14 students each (with two faculty members assigned to each homeroom), which meet during a 30-minute advisory period each morning. For instructional purposes, all juniors have been divided into three class sections of 16 to 17 students each. This division is determined by the foreign language classes that the students are placed in. Typically, classes met for one-hour time blocks every day, beginning at 7:45 am and concluded at 2:45 pm, with a 30-minute homeroom period after the first two class blocks and a 30-minute lunch period. These class time blocks could be shortened or lengthened as needed for curriculum, programming, or testing needs.

In 2020-2021, Academy seniors have been given the option to attend their university classes fully remotely or on campus. Those choosing to attend on campus are required to enroll in COVID-19 weekly testing protocols. Of enrolled seniors, 94 percent have chosen to attend some classes on campus.

Of the three options outlined in the 2020-2021 reopening plan submitted to the department of education, the remote option was selected to begin the semester, although students were brought to school in person for one day to receive materials and meet their teachers and classmates in person.

The junior class has been divided into four sections (M/N/O/P), with no section larger than 14, and two cohorts divided by language study. These were designed to accommodate smaller numbers and social distancing in the building when/if the school transitions to the hybrid model as outlined in the plan.

The daily schedule is planned in advance on a week-to-week basis, according to the educational needs of students and the occurrence of special activities and events, and it is subject to immediate adjustment in the case of unforeseen events (e.g. snow days or snow delays).

A noticeable difference in the building for 2020-2021 is the change in classroom furniture. Because of DESE guidelines, the school was required to replace all round tables with forward-facing desks. This is a major change in configuration and will present a challenge for the collaborative nature of all classes once in-person teaching/learning resumes.

In March of 2020, the Academy missed the first three days of D-term after March break as the COVID-19 crisis unfolded. The school began remote learning full-time on the fourth day, and continued with a full remote schedule until our last day of school in May. The teachers did a rapid adjustment to their pedagogical approaches, and students fully engaged in remote learning, while maintaining the project-based and collaborative nature and focus of the curriculum. The decision was made to keep in place grading policy (using letter grades rather than pass/fail) with input from teachers, students, and parents, and the end of the year culminated with events such as a virtual APP fair, Assistive Technology Team presentations, and students exhibiting their acquired knowledge through language interviews, interactive physics labs, humanities presentations, and math conferences.

An important facet of the culture at the Academy is recognizing and applauding students' individual and group achievements. This is a regular agenda item for the Academy's weekly Monday morning meetings for all juniors. In addition to publicly acknowledging National Merit awards and commendations, awards in robotics, computer programming, and math competitions, local/regional/state STEM fair achievements, writing and art contests, performance arts and sports accomplishments, and much more, these achievements are also routinely posted on the Academy's website, Twitter, and Facebook pages.

Trophies and plaques are prominently displayed in the foyer and on the walls of the entrance hallway of the Academy, where a rotating display of seniors' project posters features the accomplishments that seniors achieved in working on various projects during junior year.

Although the original senior graduation activities were postponed, the Academy seniors were able to celebrate their commencement in smaller cohorts in person on the WPI quad on August 8th.

## **Core Values, Beliefs, and Vision of the Graduate**

The following are the Core Values, Beliefs about Learning, and Vision of the Graduate for Mass Academy of Math and Science:

- **Core Values**

- Collaboration
- Intellectual curiosity
- Perseverance
- Student-centered learning
- Project-based learning
- A supportive community-based environment

- **Beliefs About Learning**

- All students have the potential to achieve
- Students learn best when given the opportunity to teach others in a collaborative environment
- Students acquire a deeper knowledge through interactive project-based learning experiences
- Optimal learning occurs in a safe, supportive community that maintains high expectations.

- **Vision of the Graduate**

- Forward-thinking
- Innovative
- Inquisitive

Confident

The Mass Academy Graduate is a creative problem-solver and life-long learner who is passionate and resilient when facing challenges and pursuing new opportunities, excels in both independent and collaborative learning environments, is able to transfer and apply extensive knowledge and skills to new situations, and is responsive to - and respectful of - the diversity of others.

**Academic/Intellectual Attributes:** knowledge, understanding, creativity, resourcefulness, organization, inquisitiveness, innovation, advanced skills in technology, oral and written discourse.

**Interpersonal Skills:** independence, collaboration, leadership.

**Civic/Ethical Behaviors:** responsibility, trustworthiness, empathy, responsiveness, altruism.

**Personal Attributes:** confidence, open-mindedness, self-motivation, reflectiveness, perseverance, adaptability.

# LEARNING CULTURE

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## Learning Culture

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

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

# STUDENT LEARNING

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## Student Learning

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

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

# PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

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## Professional Practices

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

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



# LEARNING SUPPORT

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## Learning Support

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

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

# LEARNING RESOURCES

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## Learning Resources

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

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

# Introduction

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## Introduction

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

The governing body of the Association is its Board of Trustees, which supervises the work of three Commissions: the Commission on Independent Schools (CIS); the Commission on Public Schools (CPS), which is comprised of the Committee on Public Secondary Schools (CPSS), the Committee on Technical and Career Institutions (CTCI), and the Committee on Public Elementary and Middle Schools (CPEMS); and the Commission on International Education (CIE).

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

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

### Preparation for the Accreditation Visit

Accreditation coordinators and a steering committee comprised of the professional staff were appointed to supervise the school's Accreditation process which includes the self-reflection, the Collaborative Conference visit, the development and implementation of a growth plan, and the Decennial Accreditation Visit. At the Massachusetts Academy of Mathematics and Science, a committee of four members, including the director, supervised all aspects of the Accreditation process.

Public schools seeking Accreditation through the Commission on Public Schools must complete appropriate materials to assess their alignment with the Standards for Accreditation and the quality of their educational offerings in light of the school's core values, beliefs, vision of the graduate, and unique student population. In preparation for the decennial visit, schools are required to complete a Decennial Summary Report to inform the team about their progress since the time of the Collaborative Conference visit.

In addition, the professional staff was required to read and come to consensus on the summary report to ensure that all voices were heard related to the school's progress on their priority areas for growth.

### The Process Used by the Visiting Team

A visiting team of four members was assigned by the Commission on Public Schools to conduct a Decennial Accreditation visit to the Massachusetts Academy of Mathematics and Science in Worcester, Massachusetts. The visiting team members spent four days conducting a virtual visit to the school; reviewed the self-reflection, Collaborative Conference report, and Decennial Summary Report documents; met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students, and parents; and visited classes to determine the degree to which the school aligns with the Committee on Public Secondary Schools' and Public Elementary and Middle Schools'

Standards for Accreditation and the degree to which the school is making progress toward their identified priority areas for growth as indicated in the school's improvement/growth plan.

Each conclusion in the report was agreed to by visiting team consensus. Sources of evidence for each conclusion drawn by the visiting team are included within each section of the report. The report includes commendations and recommendations that, in the visiting team's judgment, will be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning and implement its plan for growth and improvement. The report also includes an analysis of the conceptual understanding, commitment, competency, and capacity (4Cs), which is a framework used to evaluate the school's ability for continuous growth and improvement as a learning organization.

This report of the findings of the visiting team will be forwarded to the Commission on Public Schools, which will make a decision on the Accreditation of the Massachusetts Academy of Mathematics and Science.

# Foundational Element 1.1a - Learning Culture

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## Foundational Element 1.1a

The school community provides a safe environment for its students and staff, both at its facility and on the WPI Campus. The most recent School Safety and Discipline Report indicates no incidents during the 2018-2019 academic year. In the 2019 NEASC opinion surveys, 99 percent of students, 100 percent of families, and 100 percent of faculty members responded that they felt safe at the school.

The school has infrastructure and protocols in place to ensure effective responses in crisis situations. Fire alarms and emergency panic buttons with a direct connection to the WPI police department are located in all classrooms, hallways, and common areas. A WPI campus police call box in the courtyard directly outside the main entrance provides support in case of an emergency. A card-access security system is installed at the main entrance and the rear access door to the Academy, and alarms with automatic connection with the campus police are installed in all emergency exit doors. In the winter of 2019, the Academy staff participated in a Critical Incident Training workshop conducted by the WPI police department. The school also developed and implemented a return to school plan to address the issues created by the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure student safety.

## Rating

Meets the Standard

# Foundational Element 1.2a - Learning Culture

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## Foundational Element 1.2a

The school community has a written document describing its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate. The Academy has clearly articulated documentation of its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate. This information is found in the Academy student handbook and is accessible on its website.

As noted in the 2019 NEASC survey, 100 percent of the faculty, 97 percent of families, and 95 percent of students are familiar with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. Similar high percentages exist with 100 percent of the faculty, 96 percent of families, and 86 percent of students indicating they are familiar with the school's vision of the graduate. The universal application of these core values and vision of the graduate in all aspects of the school, including academic, behavioral, and civic expectations, is shared and supported by all constituent groups. Additionally, the students have a clear understanding of the essential elements embedded in the Academy's beliefs about learning and through their diligence and persistence achieve a high level of success. The vision of the graduate that incorporates "forward-thinking, confidence, innovation, and inquisitiveness" prepares students at the Academy to move forward to challenging and rewarding educational experiences.

## Rating

Meets the Standard

# **Foundational Element 2.2a - Student Learning**

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## **Foundational Element 2.2a**

While there has been considerable work, there is not yet a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments across the school. There is a written curriculum for most courses in each academic area in the school but it is not in a standard format. Because of the small size of the school, and the fact that each academic area is a singleton, most faculty recognize the need for consistency in the format for curriculum while maintaining the flexibility to innovate within each subject area. The school is moving towards full implementation of an Understanding by Design curriculum format.

### **Rating**

Does Not Meet the Standard

# **Foundational Element 3.1a - Professional Practices**

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## **Foundational Element 3.1a**

The school has a school improvement/growth plan for 2019-2021. The plan includes four goals such as, "Provide time and resources for curriculum development to ensure that the curriculum is a living and fluid document reflecting emerging topics and best educational practice research," and "Ensure students have sufficient support services to meet their needs, especially focused on social and emotional well-being." These goals reflect the priorities the school identified and articulated through the self-reflection process and actively inform decision-making in the school. In addition, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the school developed a school reopening plan in accordance with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education requirements.

### **Rating**

Meets the Standard



# Foundational Elements 4.1a - Learning Support

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## Foundational Elements 4.1a

The school has intervention strategies designed to support learners. The Academy guidance counselor is the primary resource for faculty in facilitating accommodations for students with IEP and 504 plans and other identifiable learning issues. When needed, such accommodations are implemented in both classroom environments and testing situations. The Academy also has a formal student success plan for juniors who are experiencing difficulties related to academic content and skills, organization and time management, and other issues affecting academic performance. During the first term (term A) and with the narrative report card which comes at the close of term A, faculty identify students who might be struggling with the adjustment to the Academy. Each student who is identified as needing additional support is assigned a faculty advisor. The advisory then meets with the student on a weekly basis, setting goals and serving as a mentor.

Intervention strategies for seniors include the submission of weekly advisory forms and one-on-one advisory sessions with faculty, as well as the monitoring of individual mid-term progress reports submitted by each WPI instructor. Seniors are also provided with on-campus mentoring and tutorial assistance through the resources of WPI's Math and Science Help (MASH) program and writing center.

In addition to the services of the counselor, all members of the staff serve as advisors to seniors. On the 2019 NEASC survey, 100 percent of the faculty reported that they take responsibility for both the academic well-being as well as the social and emotional welfare of their students. Results from students indicate that 79 percent of students know who to go to when they need social-emotional support, and 88 percent indicate the counselor is available when they need help.

In addition, the faculty uses a password-protected Google Doc to record any concerns they have about individual students. This "Student Concerns List" is reviewed each day by the director and/or guidance counselor. Such concerns might include behaviors or information about issues students are facing. This list is added to and updated throughout the year and helps teachers and support staff see patterns of behavior, as well as documents intervention efforts made by teachers and the outcomes of those efforts.

With the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, the Academy added a wellness counselor for eight hours per week to provide support including wellness programming and small group meetings. If this new position proves beneficial, the Academy plans to expand this wellness program for next year.

Because of the small size of the school, the intervention strategies tend to be less written or formal. However, the school has the necessary intervention strategies in place to identify and address students in need of assistance whether that is academic, social, emotional, or personal.

## Rating

Meets the Standard

# **Foundational Element 5.1a - Learning Resources**

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## **Foundational Element 5.1a**

The school site and plant support the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services. The faculty and students make optimal usage of both the 85 Prescott Street space and the campus facilities at WPI to maximize the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services. The presence of multiple-use areas and the availability of staff, materials, equipment, and other resources at both locations enhance the overall educational outcome. The facility is clean and well maintained.

In preparation for the return to learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, the school has school installed hand sanitizing stations, towel dispensers, and HEPA air purifiers in all classrooms. A plexiglass shield was installed in the main lobby in front of the operation manager's desk area. Directional signage was installed throughout the building to remind students and faculty to wear face coverings, wash and sanitize surfaces after use, and to maintain proper distancing.

The students are provided with an array of learning resources and opportunities through the collaborative relationship with WPI. This relationship provides not only access to a library, labs, and physical education facilities on the WPI campus, but also tech support, and presence and services on-site at 85 Prescott Street. For example, the librarian from WPI works with students on the Academy campus on a regular basis.

## **Rating**

Meets the Standard

# Foundational Elements Ratings

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## Foundational Element Ratings

Foundational Elements	Collaborative Conference School's Rating	Collaborative Conference Visitors' Rating	Decennial School's Rating	Decennial Visitors' Rating
1.1a - Learning Culture	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
1.2a - Learning Culture	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
2.2a - Student Learning	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet
3.1a - Professional Practices	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
4.1a - Learning Support	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
5.1a - Learning Resources	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard

# Priority Area 1

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## Priority Area

Revising the Academy's curriculum to conform with a modified Understanding By Design template.

## Action, Impact, and Growth

### Actions

The school has devoted faculty meeting time towards training staff to use an Understanding by Design (UbD) template.

Faculty meeting time has been given over for faculty to work on developing, peer reviewing, and revising curriculum documents. There has been some conversation about the UbD template and whether it is appropriate for all courses with some educators holding that it is not appropriate for their courses.

Curriculum documents have been completed but how many unit plans and how complete those plans are varies by course. In some courses they are thoughtfully and extensively completed for most units, in others, there are no completed written units at all. In some courses and units, powerful essential questions guide student and faculty thought. For example, "What does it mean to be human?", "How can technology help solve a problem in the community?" In other courses or units, questions are simplistic and do not rise to the standard of an essential question. In some courses there are extensive lists of things students will be able to do, but these tasks have not been connected to enduring understandings. There does not yet seem to be agreement about what an effective essential question is or what the most valuable enduring understandings are for the students' eleventh grade year.

### Impact

The stated need for completing curriculum documents is that for a small school, with no redundancy in the faculty, a written curriculum is valuable to incoming faculty, because it provides a resource for a new staff member and it prevents the loss of institutional knowledge as staff turns over.

The Understanding by Design process offers a powerful lens through which to examine the instructional process. Indeed, in classes that have most embraced the UbD model, the students organically talk about the essential questions without prompting, when asked to describe the class and what they are learning. For example, when a student described the Computer Science class, they asked, "What makes a good website?" and they talked about looking at a variety of websites, some more successful than others, to begin to answer that question. They saw that question as a motivation for the technical programming work they embarked on to create their websites. While all of the classes are described as challenging and collaborative, students described the courses with the most developed UbD work with vibrancy. These courses contain projects that resonate with the students, while those with less developed UbD work are described by students as "traditional." While there is nothing wrong with a traditional class, the impact of the UbD work on the student's experience is notable. Furthermore, the classes that have not embraced the UbD model seem to have fewer authentic, high-level student projects. These courses seem to derive their difficulty from tricky and complex problems, rather than problems that are focused on the essential ideas of the discipline. In addition, the absence of effective unit planning for all courses limits cross-curricular collaboration and creates a lack of clarity of what is essential for students to learn. There are also likely areas of overlap among courses and/or curricula that unnecessarily add to students' workload.

### Growth

The turnover among the staff at the Academy is quite low. As a result, the need for a written curriculum to aid in transitions does not seem to be a strong motivator. Furthermore, the Academy has a culture of hiring “master teachers,” and there is a sense among the faculty that each educator should bring their unique gifts to the position and curriculum.

With the focus on completing the curriculum work in terms of documenting the program for staff turnover, the Academy may be missing an important opportunity to think comprehensively about their unique program and shaping students' habits of mind as scientists, researchers, and citizens of the world. Because the Academy students experience a nearly homogenous program, there are unrealized possibilities of resonance between the different subjects and interdisciplinary projects. By completing a written curriculum for all courses, the school could clarify the essential understandings for students, expand interdisciplinary teaching, and reduce redundancy for students. This would allow the school to reduce stress for students, create more time for student support, and make learning more inquiry-based and authentic. Finally, a written curriculum does not need to curtail teacher creativity or autonomy. An effective written curriculum can move the creativity towards collaborative, deeper project-based learning.

## **Recommended Next Steps**

Develop a common understanding among the faculty about the value, purpose, and use of examining and documenting curriculum

Coordinate curriculum to ensure that the work students are asked to complete is essential and represents a manageable workload that supports the well-being of students

Explore culturally-proficient, diverse curricula and pedagogies that challenge the underlying racial and gender biases in the scientific community and the world

Ensure that teachers have the skills and time to develop, review, and coordinate curriculum across content areas and receive meaningful feedback to support curricular improvement

## **Sources of Evidence**

- classroom observations
- NEASC survey
- priority area meetings
- school leadership
- student-led conferences
- teachers

# Priority Area 2

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## Priority Area

Implementing additional support services focused on the social and emotional well-being of students.

## Action, Impact, and Growth

### Action

Since the collaborative conference visit, the Academy has expanded the offerings which focus on social and emotional well-being for students.

Beginning in 2019, students have taken an on-line course called Sleep-101. This sleep education program teaches students about the importance of healthy sleep habits through games, interactive activities, and videos. In addition, students have received health and wellness workshops around hygiene, the growth mindset, drug/alcohol addiction, and others.

The Wellness Committee formed three years prior and comprised of the guidance counselor, school nurse, a foreign language teacher, the WPI nutritionist, the Academy director, and the new wellness counselor, has implemented a variety of new programs and activities, including:

- altering the schedule for “Thankful Thursday” delayed opening during which students are provided with breakfast
- establishing a “Kindness Tree” on the student bulletin board for students and faculty to post positive statements
- substituting yoga in place of a typical physical education class
- incorporating meditation into foreign language classes
- encouraging students to use the calm.com mobile app to decrease stress.

In addition, the Academy has added a wellness counselor at the school. This new counselor works primarily at WPI but spends eight hours per week at the Academy. The counselor's goals include increasing students' understanding of and willingness to engage with topics around mental health and well-being with the intent of fostering an inclusive, non-judgmental and open community that promotes resilience, growth, and support. The Wellness Counselor has started implementing the RIO Course, which stands for Recognition, Insight, and Openness, and is a cognitive-based therapy program focused on helping students become aware of their own feelings and thoughts. In the second term, the wellness counselor will also be implementing a program called the Student Support Network which provides training for students and faculty. All of these initiatives taken as a whole serve to educate high-achieving students about the healthy habits and mindsets needed to maintain social-emotional health. This learning is essential given the high levels of pressure that students put on themselves.

There is evidence that some social-emotional learning is beginning to be integrated into the curriculum. The humanities curriculum features extensive journaling, which lends itself to reflecting on social-emotional well-being. Also, the focus on habits of mind and the application of those in each content area demonstrates attention paid to teaching students skills such as time management, productive work habits, and effective collaboration methods. Additionally, the UbD curriculum documents from Computer Science and from Science and Technical Writing contain lessons and explicit instruction around time management and collaboration skills. These documents highlight the beginning of efforts to fully embed social-emotional learning into the curriculum. Finally, the advisory time for both juniors and seniors provides important, formal opportunities for students to touch base with an adult and discuss the challenges they face. While not explicit instruction, this critical time allows a focus on well-being and provides students with adult mentors who can guide them in making good decisions for their social-emotional health.

## **Impact**

It is clear that faculty and administration recognize the importance of these efforts and report paying close attention to student stress levels in order to adjust the programming and strategies as needed. According to reports from faculty and students, wellness programming serves a vital function and provides constant reminders for students to take their own health and well-being seriously. While no explicit data is available to measure the impact of the wellness programming, a survey was discussed by the Wellness Committee to further identify areas of need around wellness. Students cited the stress and workload of junior year with one student saying that “all you do is study” and that for many students this was a jarring transition. However, students also talked about the efforts made by the school to help foster community and alleviate stress. Students mentioned the fact that they all knew a teacher with whom they were comfortable and could share concerns. Parents also reported the efforts made to help students adjust to the school and the new expectations. One parent cited the direct efforts by faculty and staff to help her child through a difficult transition year.

The Wellness Committee reported that teachers work to avoid overlapping project due dates and work to stay tuned into students' stress levels and needs. In the humanities class, the teacher discussed the 10 p.m. due date that was in place for assignments. The humanities teacher talked about how it was put in place to encourage students to get enough sleep instead of staying up all night to complete homework and projects. Students were asking for a change to that deadline to give them more time as it was creating stress. The humanities teacher reviewed the possible downsides of a time extension but told students that she would be willing to advocate for the change to the faculty and administration. In addition, the physics teacher took a poll at the beginning of class asking students if they were ready for an assessment and how they felt about the material and reviewed the options for delaying the assessment. These interactions seem to indicate a collaborative approach to helping students make good choices for their health and well-being and to provide students with greater control over their own learning.

The wellness initiatives as well as efforts by faculty and administration to monitor stress levels and make changes as needed demonstrate progress for the Academy in focusing on social and emotional well-being.

## **Growth**

With the continued infusion of social-emotional programming into the Academy student experience, students will be able to practice and adopt the habits essential to a work/life balance prior to entering the world of higher education. As is the case with high achieving students, Academy students are highly motivated to work hard and long to learn and achieve at the highest level. While this is certainly an admirable trait, the Academy recognizes the risks that come when physical and mental health are sacrificed to serve achievement. By continuing to emphasize and expand the role of well-being programming, the Academy will help students experience the many benefits that come with a focus on physical and mental health. These benefits could include reduced stress levels, more sleep, and a greater sense of well-being. The potential impact on students' lives is significant with students learning at an early age to pay attention to and advocate for their physical, emotional, and mental health. These positive habits have the potential to impact habits and choices they will make for their entire lives.

## **Recommended Next Steps**

Continue to consistently implement and expand well-being programming

Embed the social-emotional programming into the written documents of the school so that it can be effectively coordinated and articulated and continues through changes in leadership and/or faculty

Identify and implement the steps to reduce the student workload without negatively impacting academic progress, for example, eliminating any redundant lessons across disciplines, collaborating and coordinating units across disciplines, and/or providing students with summer instruction prior to entering the Academy

## Sources of Evidence

- NEASC survey
- parents
- priority area meetings
- school leadership
- school support staff
- school summary report
- students
- teachers



# Part 3 - Reflection on Student Learning

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## Reflection on Student Learning

Instructional practices are designed to meet the learning needs of each student across the school. The small class sizes allow teachers to individualize instruction. For example, as students arrive from multiple high schools, the humanities instructor develops instructional practices based on student learning needs through a survey. This survey includes information about the student's background, previous exposure to the subject matter, and personal interests. During virtual classroom activities, teachers monitor individual students and are able to comment on their progress. In the physics class, the teacher gave students a survey to gauge their understanding of the content and to find out whether students were ready to take an assessment or if they wished to delay until later in the course. The teacher explained how the answers to the survey would direct his instruction over the next few weeks. The teacher's practice allowed students to direct their own learning so that it met their needs.

Students are active learners who have opportunities to lead their own learning and are encouraged by their teachers to embrace challenging projects, set goals, and apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks that can be embedded into the curriculum. Students discussed their appreciation for the variety of teaching methods and especially liked the initiative to become independent learners, to find their own answers, and to focus on the learning process rather than a grade. One graduate described the environment as one with more emphasis on collaborating than competing. In the first term, no grades are given but rather teachers compose narrative reports on each student's progress. Students develop their STEM project based on an area of interest, present their proposal for instructor review and formulate all aspects of the project based on a template that includes the scope, the aim, the process, and the resulting expectation. During student interviews and their explanations of their chosen project, it was clear that students have multiple opportunities to be engaged in relevant and authentic learning. Project-based learning is evident across the curriculum. Additionally, students have opportunities to learn in and out of school, especially through the community service aspect of the curriculum. As an example, a student's work with children and adults with significant life challenges at a local facility prompted her to develop a program for American Sign Language for her Apps for Good project. Additional endeavors include the development of an App to link a community member with an elder or disabled resident in need of services such as grocery shopping. Another student pursued intricate strategies for individuals with hearing loss. A student's inquiry into a high school version of the Society for Women Engineers at WPI led to a collaboration in which college women mentored high school students who in turn anticipate mentoring younger girls.

Learners regularly engage in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills. Students explained that this cognitively challenging curriculum coupled with the collaborative learning environment were some of the reasons that students enrolled at the Academy. Each class engages students both individually and cooperatively to further their depth of understanding, analysis, synthesis, and creativity. Students take academic risks, share their insights, and recognize the value of learning from experimentation and each other. Teachers clearly outline the expectations of assignments such as a personal website or the development of a project brief, and students relied on problem-solving techniques to complete the assignment. A teacher described the learning environment as high challenge, low risk. This use of project-based curriculum encourages creativity, independence, and critical thinking skills which were demonstrated in peer editing of students' personal websites which required examination of grammar, areas for improvement, clarity, and design. Students in STEM II were given the task to design a tool that an individual with limited mobility could use to barricade a door in an emergency situation. The students worked with the client, developed and tested prototypes, evaluated the effectiveness of each prototype against a set of criteria, and then shared the results with the client.

Learners demonstrate their learning through a variety of assessment strategies that inform classroom instruction and curriculum and provide specific and measurable criteria for success. Teachers described several assessment strategies including portfolio assessments and differentiated assessments for students with various skill levels in order to help all students grow. For example, in Humanities, group presentations, thumbs up

thumbs down, class participation, essays, and one to one reviews are used. Students demonstrate understanding by writing on whiteboards and sharing ideas as well. Other instructors use pre-unit self-assessment surveys in individual classes, global assessments in the form of student surveys on such issues as homework and student workload, and course and school evaluations are done at the end of the school year. The use of school-wide rubrics for presentations in all academic areas and the use of project focused rubrics in specific academic areas reinforce this principle. In Computer Science, the teacher assesses through individual projects, one traditional test per term, labs, and exercises on one or two concepts. In foreign language, students participate in an end of the year film festival. Additionally, the instructor sits with small groups and clarifies any confusion she observes in the students' discussions or encourages a different aspect to pursue. In late August, all juniors take a practice PSAT/SAT exam, which is then scored, returned to them, and used by teachers as a diagnostic tool to prepare students for the actual PSAT administered at the Academy in October.

Learners have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning, receive corrective feedback, and use this feedback in meaningful ways to support their learning. While the STEM 1 project is a major component of the curriculum, the instructor also outlined future possibilities for the students' research. The instructor explained the Regeneron Science Talent Search which develops ideas to solve societal challenges. Elements of their STEM project could be used in a thoughtful way for submission the following academic year. Opportunities occur both within the school community and in public arenas to demonstrate students' understanding of physics and math concepts. STEM fair presentations for STEM I are conducted both in-house and at regional, state, and national/international levels, depending on students' individual advancement. In STEM II, product design and engineering reviews are held both internally and with outside professionals, and the STEM II assistive technology products are delivered to outside clients. According to a parent, her student used corrective feedback when his science project detailing issues with vaping was impacted when e-cigarettes were banned for sale in Massachusetts. With his instructor's guidance, the student was able to continue his project while navigating safety and health regulations. In STEM Writing, students submit essays for publication in professional journals. The foreign language teacher uses both written and audio portfolios throughout the year to provide effective feedback and measure progress in the language.

Learners use technology across all curricular areas to support, enhance, and demonstrate their learning. The mastery of technology is an essential component and is evident throughout all academic areas. All students use WPI's Canvas as a learning management system for all classes. Through instruction, students become proficient in HTML, Excel, Adobe, Audacity, Mathematica, Camtasia, Python, Java, LaTeX, ImageJ, LibQuantum, PCR, and the use of 3D printers. Other online systems and software are used as well as video and still cameras, various sensors, meters, calculators, micro-controllers, probes, scopes, and other measurement tools that support learning. In French and Spanish class students produce and edit their own videos to demonstrate their language proficiency as well as technological skills. Students also report that many projects use 3D printers to assist in model development. The technological expertise of the faculty was critical when the school went virtual last year due to Covid-19. One parent whose other child was in a different school described the profound difference in how the Academy seamlessly transitioned to virtual learning.

# Part 4 - Capacity for Continuous Growth as a Learning Organization

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## Conceptual Understanding

The faculty and administration of the Academy share an understanding of what effective learning looks like that is embedded in the Academy's core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate. The school has articulated four beliefs about learning:

- All students have the potential to achieve
- Students learn best when given the opportunity to teach others in a collaborative environment
- Students acquire a deeper knowledge through interactive project-based learning experiences
- Optimal learning occurs in a safe, supportive community that maintains high expectations.

These beliefs actively inform the school's structures and practices. Some curriculum is designed around essential questions and real-world problems that students work collaboratively to solve. End of year survey results from the junior class and graduating class are analyzed and discussed for school-wide trends including curriculum, classroom practices, school climate, communication, administration, and safety. The faculty actively works to know each student well, build a sense of common purpose, and support students to take risks and work collaboratively.

## Commitment

The school's vision of the graduate focuses on four areas including “forward-thinking, innovative, inquisitive, confident.” Faculty, students, and families express a strong commitment to these skills and attributes. There is also a deep commitment to growth. Students describe their learning from collaborative projects in ways that demonstrate their understanding and commitment. One student said, “It's easier to break something after you put it together. See what breaks. Iterate. It's never done. There are always ways to improve.”

In many ways, the school has demonstrated a commitment to the Standards for Accreditation and to using the Accreditation process to drive school improvement. The school has identified current and future priority areas for growth that are aligned with the Standards and designed to improve learning, achievement, and well-being for students. The addition of staff and a required course in wellness for students is an excellent example of this commitment. In addition, in many courses students are encouraged to investigate complex problems with real-world applications and find innovative solutions.

On the other hand, there is some difference of opinion among the faculty as to the purpose and value of curriculum writing and of collaborative teaching. While some recognize the value of written curriculum to ensure student an aligned curriculum that addresses standards, emphasizes essential content and skills, includes project-based learning, and creates opportunities for cross-curricular collaboration, others feel that curriculum is an individual responsibility and that teachers should be able to choose what they teach. This creates an opportunity for an important discussion and work among the faculty to develop a common agreement about curriculum writing and best practices to support ongoing school improvement to enhance the learning of all students.

## Competency

To a large extent, the faculty understand and are capable of the improvement that the school has undertaken to continue to align with the Standards and improve students' experience of school. In many ways, the school has demonstrated progress on its priority areas. There has been some training in the use of UbD unit planning and some curriculum has been written in this format. Some courses are designed around essential questions and

project-based learning. It would seem that there is a need for additional training and opportunities for faculty to receive feedback, coaching, and time to collaborate on developing and aligning curriculum to fully implement this priority area. The school's wellness committee has developed opportunities for the community to focus on student well-being. The addition of a mental health professional creates opportunities for students to learn about self-care and for the faculty to build their understanding, skill, and knowledge to continue to improve their practice in support of student well-being. Continuing this work and finding opportunities to embed these practices into all aspects of the school and teacher's work is also an area to continue to expand faculty and staff competency.

An additional area for growth would be to develop culturally responsive teaching practices across the school. This might include school-wide practices including admissions criteria and selection, support for students entering the school, and opportunities for students and faculty to engage in dialogue across differences. In addition, reviewing curriculum for bias, representation of historically marginalized communities, and ensuring projects are culturally relevant for students could be meaningful. Building instructional skills based on the latest research on culturally responsive practices could also be of great benefit to students.

## **Capacity**

The Academy has the time, resources, and support needed to make progress on its priorities. The school has sufficient staff to meet students' needs. There is a significant amount of collaboration time available which allows the faculty to meet weekly to address student concerns, coordinate curriculum development, and plan for the future. The school has significant support from and access to resources on the WPI campus. Students and teachers can access labs, the library, and other facilities to support student learning. Students in their senior year have access to all of the WPI course catalog as well as co-curricular and other programs. The nurse and mental health professionals also work at WPI and can support students while in their junior year at the Academy and in their senior year as full-time WPI students. One opportunity to consider might be additional collaboration between the WPI faculty and the Academy faculty.

# Additional Information

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## Additional Information

### Standard 2 Principle 2

School's rating in the Self-Reflection report: Developing

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

### Explanation from the School

Since the collaborative conference, teachers have been working on formatting their curriculum documents, mostly using the UbD model, and continue to work toward completion of this project as the 2020-2021 school year proceeds. This work was interrupted by the focus on re-configuring the entire program to an online platform in March of 2020.

### Response of the Visiting Team

While there has been considerable work, there is not yet a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments across the school. There is a written curriculum for most courses in each academic area in the school but it is not in a standard format. Because of the small size of the school, and the fact that each academic area is a singleton, most faculty recognize the need for consistency in the format for curriculum while maintaining the flexibility to innovate within each subject area. The school is moving towards full implementation of an Understanding by Design curriculum format.

# Commendations

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## Commendation

The school provides a safe environment for learning

The school has made significant adjustments to the physical space to ensure students safety during the COVID-19 pandemic

The school has a robust document describing the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate

The courses with completed UbD templates

The quality of the UbD work in units

The authentic projects such as Apps for Good and the science-fair research work

The instructional emphasis on promoting inquiry and problem-solving, developing higher order thinking skills, and fostering collaborative learning

The opportunities for students to develop individual STEM projects based on their areas of interest

The community service component of the curriculum that provides multiple opportunities for students to learn in and out of school

The use of a project-based curriculum that encourages independence, creativity, and critical thinking

The teaching staff who encourage students to take academic risks and to learn the value of experimentation

The use of school-wide rubrics for presentations in all academic areas

The multiple assessment strategies used by the staff that drive instruction and curriculum

The opportunities that occur both within the school community and in public arenas for students to demonstrate their understanding of concepts

The availability of technology in all curriculum areas that supports and enhances student learning

The robust support from WPI

# Additional Recommendations

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## Recommendation

Develop cross-curricular projects where multiple disciplines contribute

## Recommendation

Develop more deliberate collaboration with WPI, both to provide a community for faculty and to improve the vertical integration of the student experience

## Recommendation

Develop specific and measurable criteria of the elements of the school's vision of the graduate which can be used to drive curriculum development, assessment practices, and as a basis for providing each student individual feedback on their progress towards meeting the school's vision

## Recommendation

Embed culturally relevant practices, curriculum, and instruction throughout the school

## Recommendation

Provide summer support/programming for incoming students to help students adjust to the challenges they will face transitioning to the Academy model

## Recommendation

Address the barriers to entry for Black and Latinx students including admissions criteria, cost, recruitment, and transportation

# **FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES**

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

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

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

The Commission urges school officials to use the results of the Collaborative Conference Report as well as the school's identified priority areas for growth to draft a school growth and improvement plan, and to review and implement the findings of the Self-Reflection and valid recommendations identified in the Collaborative Conference report. An outline of the Follow-Up Program is available in the Commission's Accreditation Handbook, which is available on the Commission's website.

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



# **SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY**

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## **NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES Commission on Public Schools**

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

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

# **Roster of Team Members**

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## **Chair(s)**

**Chair: William Wehrli** - New England Association of Schools & Colleges

**Assistant Chair: Mr. Paul Daigle** - New England Association of Schools & Colleges

## **Team Members**

**Julie Gutierrez** - Killingly High School

**Dr. Sarah Avon Lewis** - Lexington High School